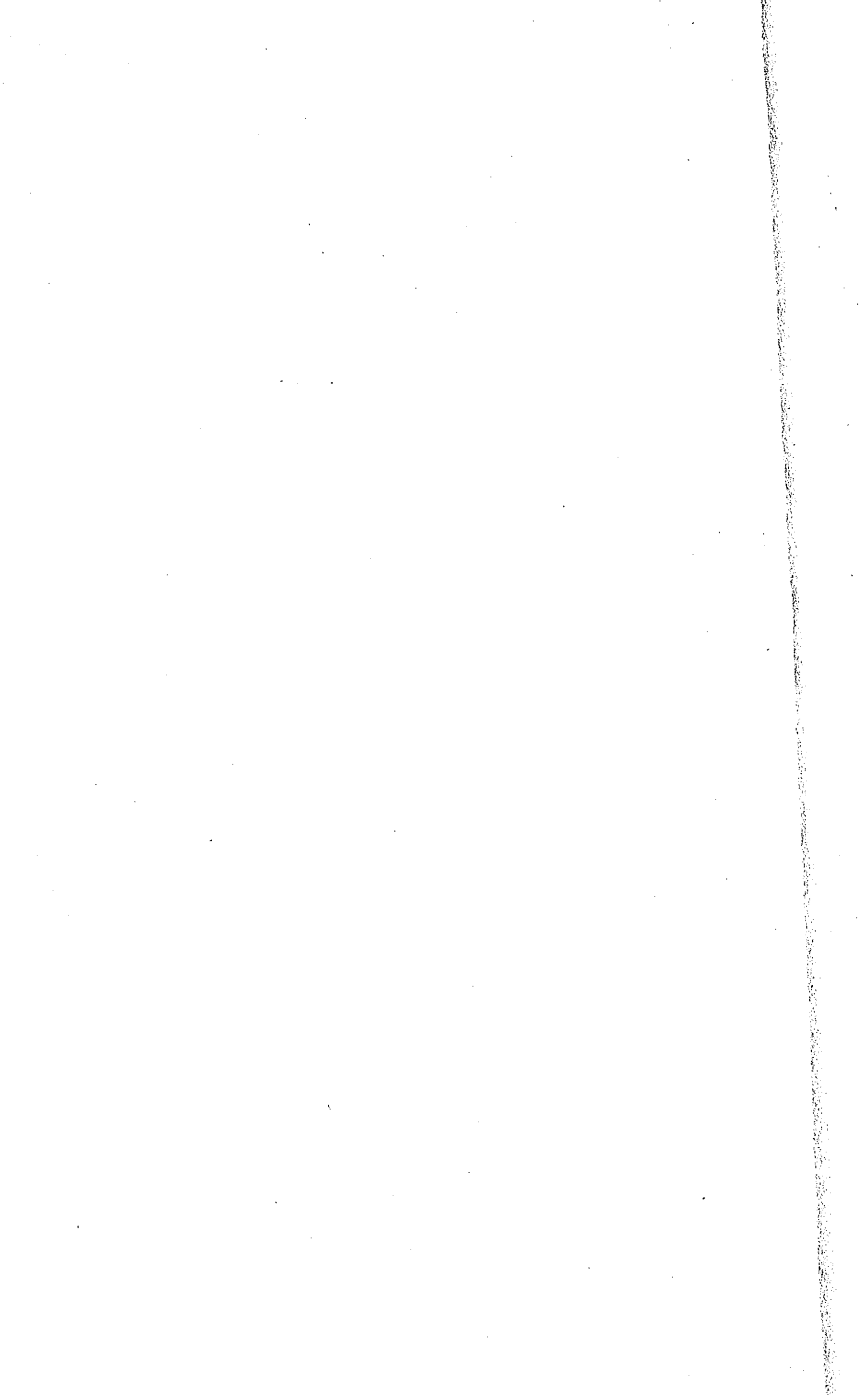


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ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI









ST. FRANCIS  
From a fresco in Subiaco

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## *The Legends and Lauds*

*Edited, Selected and Annotated*

*by*

OTTO KARRER

||

*Translated by*

N. WYDENBRUCK

LONDON

SHEED & WARD

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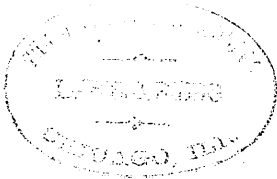
CENSOR DEPUTATUS

IMPRIMATUR: E. MORROGH BERNARD

VIC. GEN.

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Human.

*Preface*

By OTTO KARRER

HERE, FOR the first time, the most beautiful of the old legends concerning St. Francis of Assisi are brought together. They constitute a whole in much the same way (if a comparison favoured by the disciples of the Little Poor Man be permitted) as do the Gospels and the Epistles of the New Testament. Although the legends are by different authors and each one treats the subject in his own individual manner, they belong together owing to the common spirit that pervades them, the equal reverence for the master, and they complete each other through their very differences.

It has seemed appropriate to introduce each section with an historical preface in order to explain its origin, its peculiar qualities and the different stages of its historical development; we have also added explanatory notes to those passages which have ceased to be self-explanatory to-day. For even if we were unaware of the gulf that separates us from the men and women of the Middle Ages, it would be revealed to us by the legends of St. Francis, near as they are to us in some respects. What appeals to us is their simplicity: the life of a great man, his ideals and his struggles, his temptations and his spiritual joys, his disappointments and his renewed efforts are shown us with a candour that we seek in vain in most of the legends of the saints.

I did not originally set out to increase the great store of scholarly knowledge concerning St. Francis, which has been garnered with astonishing zeal. Nevertheless, in the course of the studies preparatory to this book, I chanced upon several things that should not only interest the specialists of mediaeval scholasticism and literature, but also appeal to poets and psychologists alike.

Evidently there could be no question of reproducing the different texts in their entirety, not only with regard to the available space, but also because this would lead to many repetitions, some of the legends actually reproducing the others word for word. In sorting the material it was found that this could easily be avoided without detracting from the originality or the structure of the legends.



As to the word *legend*, which was already current in the Middle Ages, a few words of explanation seem necessary so as to prevent misunderstanding by the modern reader. The word suggests a pious tale, arising out of the religious spirit of the people. Actually this does not apply to the legends of St. Francis and only in a strictly limited sense to the *Fioretti*, which were set down a century after his death. True, the Franciscan legends were written to a great extent by true poets, to judge by their conception and their language, but they are records of facts that really happened and in most cases can be dated and placed. Admittedly their authors were not content to chronicle the events in the life of their hero and his friends and their sayings in the manner of an historian; they wrote with a spiritual purpose. They record the facts as loving disciples, apprehending them with their hearts. Love has a peculiar quality of magic that communicates itself from the scribe to the reader and allows the latter to visualize the hero of the tale as his early followers did—surrounded by a halo of unearthly light. And yet the Saint remains entirely *human* and every word conveys the charm of a unique personality that impresses itself indelibly on our memory.

The Franciscan legends stand alone in the history of literature by the fact that their miraculous content seems to place them in the realm of dreams and myths, while a closer investigation shows that they are records of historical events, without robbing them of the aesthetic appeal of their candid simplicity.

We cannot understand St. Francis or the religious revival emanating from him without understanding the times he lived in and his country. The authors of the old legends said nothing about these matters—the relations of their hero to the world that surrounded him appeared self-evident to them and to their readers. But to us to-day, he might as well have fallen straight from heaven; and even though heaven had so great a part in his being, he remained nevertheless a true son of Umbria and especially of the little mediaeval township that was so proud to count him among its citizens.

In order to visualize ancient Assisi (1) we must first blot out from our memory all the large modern utilitarian buildings which have been added to it and make such an ambiguous impression on the visitor of to-day: in the first place the prosaic railway-station in the valley near the Portiuncula; then the equally matter-of-fact giant cupola that covers the once sylvan shrine so dear to St. Francis's heart, now imprisoned within the towering basilica. We must close

our eyes to the modern hotels and to the great edifice of San Francesco (a "mournful cathedral" Goethe called it); we must forget the great monastery and the basilica on the northern fringe of the town which the Vicar-General of the Order, Brother Elias, erected for St. Francis's canonization in 1228 with the money of the provinces, scandalizing the brethren. St. Francis himself saw none of these things.

Ancient Assisi had the homogeneity that we can still admire to-day in the lay-out of Todi or San Gimignano. The unpretentious dwellings of the citizens with their picturesque nooks and porches lie on both sides of narrow, paved streets, overtopped by the ornate palaces of the nobles with their defiant towers, to-day slowly crumbling into ruins. Since the reign of the consuls, that is to say since Francesco's boyhood, there existed a law forbidding anyone to construct a tower as high as the *torre comunale*, which still rises, a symbol of bygone greatness, over the palace of the People's Captain. The square beneath it must have been a sheer delight, its chief beauty the exquisite Corinthian columns of the *atrium* that formed the entrance to the temple of Minerva, constructed by Caesar Augustus, which could be seen far across the valley, dominating the town. The noblemen's palaces and the rich dwellings of the merchants, Francesco's parents among them, were assembled round the *mercato* and continued to the Bishop's Palace and the cathedral and *campanile* of San Ruffino, which still fills us with awe, as we admire its noble romanesque architecture. In the old days, when the warring factions of the town could not settle their differences, it often happened that they remembered their saintly patron and made their peace in that family mansion of the community, the house of San Ruffino. For in the Middle Ages that cathedral was the true shrine of the people, despite the numerous churches and chapels, Santa Maria degli Angeli, San Giorgio, Santa Maria Maggiore, San Pietro, San Damiano—which were open day and night for the petitions of the faithful. The lepers—to whom St. Francis was to devote especial care—had two little churches at their disposal, San Ruffino d'Arco and Santa Maria Maddalena, both of which still stand to-day. The whole town was surrounded by strong walls and crowned by the imperial castle on the Rocca. Barbarossa, though he had declared Assisi a free city in 1160, immediately installed a constable, but no more than two were allowed to exercise their despotism. The second imperial bailiff, Conrad von Luetzen, Count of Assisi and Duke of Spoleto, was forced to fly before an outbreak of

popular fury in 1198, and since then only the ruins of the mighty fortress have stood on the heights of the Rocca.

Manifold impressions crowded in on young Francis as he wandered far and wide with his companions on to the slopes of Monte Subasio and to the Benedictine abbey on the crest of the hill, or rested on the garden-terrace of San Damiano while the evening breeze stirred the foliage of the olive-trees and the sinking sun gilded the wide valley at his feet—a valley stretching from the hills of Perugia in the north along the vale of the Tescio to Foligno and as far south as Spoleto. Then his dreams of happiness and beauty were rudely shattered before he had even attained manhood.

War broke out. The tidings that had reached Assisi, (2) culled from the great *History of the World and the Church* or the tales the youth heard in his own small world, had no resemblance at all to the promise that a hermit used to proclaim in the streets at that time: "Pax et bonum." (3) Innocent III, in the first year of his pontificate (1198), was already accepting the challenge of the arrogant Hohenstaufens. Everywhere Ghibelline was fighting Guelf, the ideals of knighthood were waging a losing battle against the ever encroaching power of the burgesses; the policy of neighbouring republics was to make a business of war, and all business was a preparation for new wars. In the course of the twelfth century Perugia had fought victoriously against Chiusi, Cortona, Assisi and Todi and become the predominant power in Umbria. The fall of the imperial constable in Assisi had inaugurated the reign of the *popolani*, the democratic people's party under the leadership of consuls. When the most prominent nobles, led by Ghislerio di Sasso Rosso and Monaldo, St. Clare's uncle, fled to Perugia, that Ghibelline city found a welcome pretext to interfere once again in the affairs of Assisi. Although every man between the ages of eighteen and sixty was called to arms, (4) Assisi's little army suffered a decisive defeat at Ponte San Giovanni during the summer of 1202, and many of its citizens, among them Francis, who was serving with the cavalry, were taken prisoner by the Perugians. A victory paean by Perugia's "court poet" Bonifacio da Verona has been preserved; it begins with the verse:

"Axisinas, quam mesta dies, lugubris et horrida fuit!"

(Women of Assisi, what a day of carnage, mournful and horrid.) (5)

The proud consuls refused to surrender. The new city walls, which Francis had certainly helped to construct, thus learning the

trade which was to stand him in good stead when he undertook the restoration of San Damiano, were fit to withstand a long siege. It was in vain that the Pope and the Bishop attempted to enforce peace by laying an interdict on the city and that enemy soldiers devastated villages and farms around it; it was not until King Philip of Suabia recognized the rule of the consuls in 1205 and solemnly refused a peace-treaty with Perugia to which Assisi should not be a party, (6) that a temporary truce was called.

In the meanwhile Francis had been released from captivity a sick man. We can imagine that his sufferings as a prisoner of war could not fail to have spiritual repercussions, even though at that time his secular ambitions, the *cupidigia di gloria*, must have given the impression that his lust for life was undiminished. The events he witnessed in his natal city on his return and during the following years must also have made a profound impression on his sensitive spirit. The documents of the city archives bear abundant witness of family tragedies, impoverished houses, hunger and crime. Fortini had studied the records of law cases during those years: assaults at night, immorality, fraud and murder were frequent. (7) A generation to whom war had become a habit, a necessity, and a pleasure could not be expected to retain its ethical standards. The nobles were of the opinion that they were exempt from the laws; judicial decisions might be binding for the citizens, but not for the lords who carried swords. "*Orgoglio e cupidigia*"—pride and cupidity—are the words which a contemporary chronicler wrote on the title-page of a history of the manners of the city, and a pious seer, who was later to become one of St. Francis's companions, had a vision of a fiery dragon arising to devour its citizens. (8) We can imagine how these conditions must have impressed a young man full of idealism, as Francis was. It is not surprising that the conversion which was preparing itself in his soul and finally assumed the intensity of a divine call should have been expressed by the very ideas that presented the most striking contrast to the principles of the world around him—the ideals of "poverty and humility". ✓

Lest a misunderstanding arise, let me say straight away that I have no intention of "psycho-analysing" the process of conversion: God's mysteries come to man in a manner that transcends psychological comprehension. Only what we can know about them, as they are reflected in the spiritual life of a human being, can be the subject of religious psychology. There is no irreverence in presuming that He who called to Saul at Damascus should have prepared the

final breaking-through of grace, beginning with the impressions Saul received when he witnessed the death of the first Christian martyr.

A serious misunderstanding has led some historians to conclude that St. Francis was actuated by secret political motives, because the appellation "*minori*", which he chose for his brotherhood, was also used to designate the democratic party of the Italian civic republics.(9) They do not seem to know that he had found the words "the lesser brothers" in the Scriptures and admittedly derived the name from that source;(10) neither do they take into consideration that the earliest of St. Francis's companions, including Clare and her sisterhood, were mostly recruited from the ranks of the nobility and the wealthy citizens.(11) True, he also admitted the sons of poor peasants and welcomed them with equal joy, provided that they possessed that nobility of soul which was the only thing he cared about. We cannot help feeling that it is an idle speculation, involving something suspiciously like distortion of the mentality of a mediaeval saint, when G. Mestica says: "If Francis had lived in our time, he would not only have been a great democrat, which he already was then, but possibly also a great socialist." (12) In fairness we must add—and this clause makes it comprehensible, although there is not much point in using words that belong to another context—"While modern socialism aims at the earthly well-being of the masses and frequently allows itself to be diverted into class hatred and bitter strife, the Saint, fixing his eyes on the eternal goal of man, was far removed from any form of enmity; he recoiled so strongly from hatred that he was continually admonishing his disciples with the words: 'Give a humble answer to all who question you, bless your persecutors, give thanks to those who abuse you and slander you: for that the eternal kingdom has been prepared for you.' "(13)

During those decisive years St. Francis had no contact with the contemporary trends in the Church, except as far as they were reflected in the life of his city. It appears certain that he knew nothing of the other religious movements of reform based on the ideal of apostolic poverty, although they have a close resemblance to his own foundation.(14) But he knew enough through his experiences in the immediate neighbourhood of his home, when he turned to religion, to understand the necessity of reform in the Church. Silvester's obvious greed for money while he was still exercising his priesthood in the world, and the continual litigations of the chapter and the bishop for tithes and property, (15) would have sufficed, even for a nature less sensitive than his, to reveal the

deeper meaning in the call "to rebuild the church which is falling in ruins". Later St. Francis was often to explain the motives of his ideal of poverty with the explicit affirmation that the Church, languishing spiritually on account of her wealth and her rise to great political power, must be reminded of Christ and the Apostles through the example of absolute and voluntary poverty, and thus detached from her worldliness. (16)

Was Francis under a delusion when he read the Gospels and thought to find in Christ the uncompromising attitude which, as he believed, the Lord had revealed to him as a model?

Critical observers, even inside his own order, are of that opinion. (17) St. Francis suffered a veritable martyrdom for the sake of his ideal at the hands of his own followers during the last years of his life; half a century later John of Parma (or whoever the author of *The Mystical Nuptials of the Lady Poverty* may have been) (18) collected once again all arguments in the Bible in favour of absolute poverty. Nevertheless it has been pointed out that Christ did not lay down hard and fast rules when He sent out His disciples, but adapted Himself to existing conditions and desired the Apostles to do the same. Although on their first tentative mission to Palestine He bade them take nothing with them (Matt. x. 9, 10)—this passage was decisive for Francis—the command appears slightly modified in Mark vi. 8, 9; and when He sent them out beyond the frontiers of Judaea, He even commanded them to take a purse, a scrip and a sword (Luke xxii. 36). Christ paid taxes, and Judas, the treasurer, accepted presents of money for the others (Matt. xvii. 23, John xii. 6). H. Felder says: "Francis appears to have overlooked these passages." Thus his ideal remained narrower and more ascetical than that of Christ, and as he believed he had to follow the Bible text, as he understood it, to the letter, the tragic conflict between the brethren which was to be so disastrous for his foundation became inevitable. Because there was a discrepancy between the mystic ideal of the Little Poor Man and the actual teaching of Christ, and because he was convinced that he had been made to understand the real evangelic truth by divine inspiration, "the Saint found himself tragically propelled into a dilemma between obedience to God and obedience to the Church which demanded that he should conform—a dilemma from which there was no escape". Doubtless this was the reason for the long and terrible period of temptation of which his companions tell us. This is the opinion of present-day Franciscans, which cannot be refuted on scriptural grounds.

I mention this question only in so far as it presents one of the chief biographical problems and is one of the main themes of the following legends. It is not in our province to argue the theological point. The importance of St. Francis does not depend on whether his inspiration was "right" from an objective point of view; if he was mistaken, his was a "providential mistake", for deadly poisons need violent antidotes. These cannot be provided by theoretical maxims or theological discussions, but only by acts—the examples of saintly men who demonstrate the neglected truth, even though they may do so in a seemingly exaggerated fashion.

Let us return to the origin of the movement towards religious poverty. Actually the reasons for the foundation of St. Francis were very similar to those that actuated the movement of the Waldenses. The similarities between them have often been studied (19) and it has been suggested that St. Francis played the part of an imitator. Peter Waldo was also the son of a rich merchant; the identical passage in the Gospels assumed paramount importance in forming his ideals and he, too, presented himself before the Sovereign Pontiff in order to attain the confirmation of his rule. But Waldo did not find the same understanding in Pope Alexander III which the far-seeing Innocent III, richer by the experience of a lifetime, was to extend to the lay apostle of poverty. Furthermore, Waldo allowed his energies to be diverted into a sectarianism which was entirely alien to St. Francis's nature. No matter how one judges Waldo, there can be no doubt that the Little Poor Man owed nothing to his influence or to that of any other movement. This becomes a certainty when one studies contemporary documents. The religious ideal of absolute poverty was in the air and it is natural that the reactions of godly men to the worldliness of the prelates of the time led them in the same direction—towards an imitation of Christ through the poverty imposed on the Apostles. It is not surprising that the leaders of these reforms were usually laymen who took the initiative in their despair at the attitude of the clergy; this was the case for the "Kathars" of the North, the Waldenses of Lyons, the "Catholic Poor" of North Italy and the "Little Poor" of Assisi.

Innocent III was the first Pope far-seeing enough to realize the plight of the Church and to encourage the new ideals. A scion of the house of the Counts of Segni, he had, while he was still a young cardinal, seen his plans destroyed by the enemy of his family, Celestinus III, a member of the Orsini family. At that time he wrote a work with the title *On despising the World*; one seems to feel that

he remained true to this mental attitude even when he had achieved supreme power.(20) He was sincerely inclined to give full scope to apostolic missions and evangelic poverty within the Church, under the condition that "dogma should remain unquestioned and hierarchical authority recognized". Thus he allowed the "Umiliati" of Verona, who had been excommunicated by Lucius III, to be re-established as a lay-order in 1201, the converted group of Waldenses under Durandus of Huesca in 1207-8, the wandering preachers of Bernardus Primus in 1210. Immediately afterwards the poor brothers of Assisi appeared in Rome and were licensed in their turn.(21)

The ideal of poverty, implying complete renunciation of personal as well as communal property, which St. Francis preached and demonstrated by the voluntary example of his own life and that of his companions, made a deeper impression on the hearts of his contemporaries than the teachings of his predecessors had done. Many awoke to the realization of a higher truth, although the great masses remained as they had always been. The explanation why the Saint met with comparatively little opposition from clerical quarters lies in his humility. He taught his disciples and showed them by his own example never to criticize. Nothing proves more strikingly what a true follower of Christ he was than his conviction that rebellion in religious matters, even if it be humanly justified, may be applauded by the excited masses, but can never have an enduring salutary effect—partly because of the dubious character of the followers or the leaders. Only the pure simplicity of a personal example of goodness can win over religious natures—and religious natures alone—to genuine Christianity.

The populace has a feeling for these things. Especially in the South it has often happened that it has adored its saints (and others as well) during their lifetime, while it has also burnt others alive. It refused to give up St. Francis, and so the Chapter of the Order was forced, in its own interest, to keep up the pretence that Francis was still directing it, even after he had been morally forced to resign from leading his foundation. The letters of his contemporaries Jacques de Vitry (22) and Pier della Vigna (de Vineis), secretary of the Emperor Frederic II,(23) show clearly what a great moral power the Little Poor Man of Assisi represented during his time. Rarely has a canonization been the expression of the will of the people to the extent his was. He was canonized in 1228, only two years after his death. It was a "plebiscite of Christendom".(24)

The affection that Francis of Assisi inspires not only within the



limits of the Catholic Church, but also in the hearts of Protestants and Anglicans,(25) can be explained by the quality of his nature, which is as admirable from the purely human as from the religious point of view. He was one of the great ones whose kingdom is not of the world, a friend of the poor and the humble, a man of genuine human kindness from whom Heaven had demanded the bitterest sacrifices, but to whom it had likewise awarded the purest joys. He was austere, and yet at one with nature, of a religious temperament, but full of gaiety, free of all conventional unreality, receptive towards beauty as only a poet can be, and in his childlike simplicity fulfilling the promise of Christ: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."

So much has already been written about these things that it appears redundant to add more in this strain. The original documents can speak for themselves.

The pleasant duty remains to me to express my thanks to those who have helped my work by their generous permission to consult their libraries: in the first place I do so to Mgr. Hilarin Felder, O. M. Cap. in Fribourg, and to the brethren of St. Francis in the monasteries of Wesemlin, Lucerne, of Madonna di Sasso, Locarno and of Loreto, Lugano, especially to Fr. Maternus Rederstorff, O. Min. Unfortunately I could not consult a copy of the edition of the *Fioretti*, by M. Casella (Florence 1926), owing to the closing of the frontiers; possibly it already contains the matter of my critical notes to certain chapters of the *Fioretti*. In any case, the reader will find some new beauties in addition to those which the legends of St. Francis have always offered.

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## *Giovanni di Ceprano*

### THE LEGEND OF THE THREE COMPANIONS (1241 TO 1246)

#### INTRODUCTORY

FOR A LONG time there was much speculation among scholars about this, the most beautiful story of St. Francis's youth, which Z. Lazzeri calls the "best and most complete" chronicle of the Saint's development and early years, and which aroused the unqualified admiration of Sabatier owing to the psychological sensitivity of its rendering. It was not known whence it derived its name, nor who its author was.

We continue to refer to this legend as that of the "Three Companions"—that is to say the closest confidants of the Saint, Brothers Leo, Ruffino and Angelo (according to Tancredi)—because it would be merely confusing to alter the name by which it has been known for centuries, yet there is no doubt that this title is due to a misunderstanding. Although the introductory letter which used to be printed with the legend was most certainly written by the three companions, it is entirely alien from the contents of the traditional legend. To-day nobody believes that the companions were the authors of the legend itself.

Apparently the title it bears is due to the fact that it was handed by the three companions, together with their own reminiscences, to the General of the Order, Crescentius of Jessi, in 1246. Then, when for reasons I shall go into later, their own collected memories had to disappear, their accompanying letter, which refers to reminiscences of their own, was attached to the legend of St. Francis's youth; thus it came about that the latter came down to history under the name of the "Three Companions".

Some critics deny that the origins of this legend are to be sought so early, and would like to see it ascribed to the end of the thirteenth century.<sup>(1)</sup> Although this would not detract in any way from the beauty of the legend and only very slightly from its historical interest, it would be exaggeration to ascribe great evidential value

to these criticisms. Personally I am convinced by the arguments of Lazzeri, who sets out to prove that our legend is identical with the mysteriously lost legend written by "the Reverend Sir John of Ceprano, Secretary to the Apostolic See" (of Pope Gregory IX), which, according to the statement of Bernhard of Bessa, who was well informed, began with the words "Quasi stella matutina".(2) In two manuscripts our legend is preceded by a foreword in which the theme of the "morning star" recurs and is treated with great literary skill.(3) Much speaks for the assumption—and, as far as we can see, nothing against it—that Giovanni of Ceprano was actually the author of the beautiful legend of St. Francis's youth; as it was completed in or before 1246 and offered to the companions for their collection, Thomas of Celano was able to use both the Ceprano Legend and the recollections of the Three Companions for his second Life of St. Francis.

The General of the Order had invited the Three Companions to contribute to a new and more comprehensive edition of the *Life of St. Francis* by Thomas of Celano, as they had been the Saint's most confidential friends and had witnessed many events of his life in person. In 1246 they met at Greccio in order to exchange their personal reminiscences—they also used the reports of two deceased brethren, Bernardo and Egidio (Giles), and contacted the Brothers Philip, Masseo and Illuminato. These facts emerge from the covering letter they wrote to the General of the Order.(4) They stated in this letter that they had abstained from inditing a separate, original biography of the Saint and had decided to "collect only some of the flowers that appear to us to be most beautiful", without striving to attain a chronological sequence or a complete chronicle, leaving it to Thomas of Celano to use their material as he chose, "in his so truthful and enlightening manner".

This covering letter of the Three Companions obviously does not refer to the Legend of St. Francis's youth, as the latter is presented as a complete story, but it fits the material collected by the companions themselves, which has been preserved, although it had been spurned as apocryphal from time to time, and is reproduced in the third part of this book. As, for the reasons indicated above, the collection of facts made by the Three Companions remained in abeyance for a time, the covering letter was only reproduced in connection with the Ceprano Legend. This explains how this legend, owing to the alleged prefatory words of the Three Companions, could be ascribed to them.

Nevertheless there exists a close connection between the Legend of Ceprano (the so-called *Legend of the Three Companions*) and the actual three companions of the Saint, especially Brother Leo. It is obvious that Ceprano's work is nothing more than a repetition, in the best literary style, of the older so-called *Perugia Legend* (5) which in all probability was written by Brother Leo himself, a theory held by Papebroch and recently documented by Lazzeri. (6)

Thus our legend can be safely ascribed to the collaboration of Brother Leo and Giovanni of Ceprano; the companion of the Saint is responsible for the original conception, while Pope Gregory's secretary gave it its literary formulation. Leo's original manuscript (the *Perugina*) was written between 1230 and 1241, while Ceprano's version must have been made during the five following years.

My translation has been made from the Latin original. The early Italian text, in the language of the fourteenth century, was first published by Melchiorri in 1856 and republished in 1899 by Civezza Domenichelli, together with the fascicle of the *Three Companions*. Since that time Lazzeri discovered another early Italian version, which he published in 1923.

## THE YOUTH OF ST. FRANCIS AND THE BEGINNINGS OF HIS FOUNDATION

### PREFACE

Shining like the dawn and the morning star, even like the sun flooding the earth with ardent streams of light to render it fruitful, thus Francis appeared at his emergence, like a new luminary. At the rising of this sun the earth lay numbed by the frosts of winter, in darkness and devoid of life. His words and his deeds were like a clear light, resplendent with truth, flaming with love and by virtue, the mother of all merit, awakening a new and finer life. The three communities he founded<sup>1</sup> blossomed like a garden containing different trees laden with fruit. How marvellous was their fruitfulness! It was like the coming of spring to the world. (7)

<sup>1</sup> The Franciscan brotherhood (Friars Minor), the sisterhood (Poor Clares), and the "lay community of penitents" (The Third Order).

## THE BEGINNINGS

Francis, born in Assisi in the valley of Spoleto [in 1182], was at first given the name Giovanni by his mother; (8) he was born during his father's absence, and when the latter returned from France, he received the name Francesco. (9)

After he had attained manhood and developed his native discernment, he devoted himself to the profession of his father, who was a merchant. Yet this he did in his own way. Merry and generous by nature, ever ready for jest and song, he roamed the town of Assisi day and night with his comrades and was most prodigal in his spending—to such an extent that he used all the money allowed him and all his earnings for banquets and festivities.

For this reason his parents frequently remonstrated with him, pointing out that he was living in such style with his friends that he no longer seemed to be their son, but the son of a great prince. Yet as his parents were wealthy and loved their son tenderly, they allowed him to have his own way rather than disturb him. . . .

Nevertheless an inborn delicacy and courtesy characterized his manners and his speech, and the kindness of his heart was such that he resolved never to utter a rude or unkind word to anyone. . . .

One day, when Francis was standing in the shop and selling cloth, a poor man came in and begged for alms for the love of God, but being occupied and tempted by cupidity and the desire for riches, he refused. At that moment the grace of God touched him, he reproached himself for his hard-heartedness and said to himself: "If the beggar had pleaded in the name of a great count or baron, I would surely have given him what he asked; how much more willingly should I do so for the sake of the King of kings, the Lord of creation!"

From that day onwards he carried the resolution in his heart never again to refuse anything that might be asked him for the sake of so mighty a Lord.

## YOUTHFUL PLANS

Towards the close of one of the wars between Perugia and Assisi Francis was taken prisoner with many of his fellow-citizens and

carried to Perugia. The nobility of his bearing was such that he was put to share the quarters of the noblemen. . . . At the end of that year, when the afore-mentioned cities had made a treaty of peace, Francis and his fellow-citizens returned to Assisi. (10)

A few years later a nobleman of the town of Assisi got together an armed force, with the intention of marching into Apulia and gaining prize-money and honours. When Francis heard of this, he was tempted to join the expedition. He intended to become the squire of a certain Count Gentile (11) and therefore furnished himself and his horse as magnificently as possible. Although he was not as wealthy as his noble fellow-townsmen, the costliness of his apparel and equipment put that of the Count in the shade.

While he was thus enjoying visions of future glory and devoting his energies to preparing against his departure, the Lord sent him a dream, which, by means of a vision, still further incited his desire for fame.

One night, while he was asleep, someone called him by name and led him into a great and magnificent palace. There he saw manifold weapons, splendid shields and armour of all kinds hanging on the walls, as though in expectation of feats of arms.

Francis rejoiced greatly and asked in amazement who owned the splendid shining arms and the beautiful palace. He was told that everything, the palace included, belonged to him and his cavaliers. (12)

He woke up and rose gaily from his bed, thinking in his worldliness, in the manner of a man who has not yet partaken fully of the spirit of God, that he would attain great fame by deeds of war, and as he interpreted his dream as an omen of great future prosperity, he decided to ride into Apulia, where the aforesaid Count would make him a knight. . . .

On the day before, an incident had happened, an example of rare generosity, which assuredly played a great part towards the vision. Francis had given away his new equipment, that had been fashioned for him in so rich, curious and costly a fashion, to a needy nobleman. (13)

As he rode on his way and had already reached Spoleto, he began to feel somewhat dejected. Nevertheless he was most eager to continue his journey, but when he lay down and was half asleep, he heard someone asking him whither he intended to go. After



Francis had explained his plans, the voice said: "Who can help you more, the master or the man?"

"The master," he replied.

Again the voice spoke, saying: "Why then do you forsake the master for the man, the Prince for the vassal?"

And Francis said: "Lord, what should I do?"

"Return to your home, and you will be told what you are to do—you must interpret the vision you had in your dream in a different way."

On awakening he began to meditate seriously on this vision. As the first vision had lifted him outside himself with delight and the desire for earthly prosperity, so this one turned his soul inwards. . . . In the morning he rode back to Assisi with all haste, filled with great gladness and the expectation that the will of God should be revealed to him. . . .

#### THE BRIDE

One evening, a few days after he had returned to Assisi, his comrades elected him as master of the revels, (14) leaving it to him to spend what he liked. He ordered a sumptuous banquet to be prepared, as he had often done in the past. After they had feasted, the young men left the hall, his associates preceding him as they wandered singing through the town, (15) Francis following with the staff, the sign of his office, in his hand. He fell behind the others, singing no longer, but absorbed in meditation. For at that moment the Lord touched his heart, and it was filled with such surpassing sweetness that he could neither speak nor move, neither feel nor hear anything outside that overwhelming sweetness. And, as he himself was later to describe it, he was so detached from his corporal senses that he could not have moved from the spot even if he had been cut in pieces there.

When his companions looked round and saw him standing so far behind, they turned back, and to their amazement and terror they saw that he seemed to have been transformed into another man. They questioned him, saying: "What were you thinking of, that you did not follow us? Are you thinking of getting married?"

Whereupon he exclaimed with great vivacity: "You have spoken the truth! And you have never seen a nobler, wealthier or more beautiful lady than the bride I intend to take!"

From that hour (16) he began to hold himself as naught and to despise the things he had been most attached to—though not yet perfectly, for he had not yet detached himself entirely from the vanities of the world. But in withdrawing from its noise and turmoil, he hoped to be able to hold Jesus Christ secretly in his soul.

In the hopes of gaining this priceless pearl by selling all he had, he wished to conceal it from the scoffers, so he withdrew frequently, even daily, to taste the sweetness of silent prayer. . . .

For a long time already he had been a benefactor of the poor, but now he resolved more firmly than ever never to refuse his aid to a needy man who begged for alms in the name of God. He hoped he would be able to give even more gladly and freely than he had done heretofore. . . .

As his mother loved him better than all her other children, (17) she allowed him to have his will, but she observed all he did and wondered in her heart. Formerly he had cared for nothing better than to join his comrades when they were expecting him; often he had risen from table after having barely tasted his food, leaving his parents in distress at the unseemly haste of his departure; now, however, his only desire was to see the poor and hear them, so that he might give them alms for Christ's sake. (18)

### THE CONQUEST OF SELF

One day when Francis was praying to God to enlighten him, the answer came: "Francis, you must despise and hate all that your body has loved and desired up till now, if you would recognize my will. Once you have begun, you will find that everything which seemed pleasant and sweet to you will turn to unbearable bitterness, but the things that formerly made you shudder will give you peace and joy."

Thus divinely fortified, it happened that while he was riding in the neighbourhood of Assisi he met a leper. Up till then he had regarded such men with great loathing. But lo! now he conquered his revulsion, got down from his horse, gave the leper a coin and kissed his hand. And the leper gave him the kiss of peace. Then Francis mounted his horse and continued on his way.

From that day he mortified himself more and more, until, with God's grace, he succeeded in winning a complete victory over his

own self. A little later he took a large sum of money and betook himself to the lazar-house, where he called all the lepers together, and he handed each one a gift of money and kissed his hand. And when he had left the place, it came to pass that what had been a torment to him had been transformed into a sweet joy, namely to look upon the lepers and to touch them. . . . As he himself said in his testament, he delighted in keeping company with them and serving them.

When he became aware of his own transformation after his visit to the lepers, Francis often took a favourite companion of his, to whom he was very attached, to a solitary spot in the neighbourhood of Assisi. He told his friend that he had found a great treasure there, and the young man followed gladly every time he called him. When they arrived at this place, Francis would lead him to a cave and enter it alone, leaving his friend, who hoped to unearth the treasure, at the entrance, while he, seized by a new and unaccustomed spirit, prayed to the "Father which is in secret". None but God was to know what he was doing while he fervently begged for enlightenment on how to gain the celestial treasure. . . .

#### THE VOICE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED

One day, (19) while he was calling most ardently on God's mercy, the Lord showed him that he would soon be instructed on what he was to do. And he was filled with great rejoicing. . . .

A few days later, as he was passing the church of San Damiano, an inner voice told him to enter it and pray. He did this, and prayed devoutly before an image of Christ on the cross, when a mild and gentle voice came from it, saying: "Francis, do you not see that my house is being destroyed? Go and repair it for me!"

Trembling and astounded, he replied: "Gladly will I do that, O Lord!" He thought that these words must refer to the little church of San Damiano, which was falling into ruins with old age.

But what he heard filled his soul with so much joy and radiance that he actually felt the presence of Christ crucified, who had spoken to him, in his own soul. As he left the church, he saw the priest [whose name was Pietro] (20) sitting in front of it; reaching for his purse, he handed him a sum of money, saying: "I beg you, Sir, to

buy some oil with this and keep the lamp before the image of Christ crucified always alight. When the money is used up, I will bring you again what you need for this purpose."

From that hour onwards his heart would melt with pity and love at the thought of Christ's suffering, and he never ceased to bear in his soul "the marks of the Lord Jesus" which fact was marvellously revealed when he later received these same marks "in his body" [Gal. vi. 17], in such a manner that all could see them. For that reason he was so harsh towards himself, mortifying his body so that he always demanded too much of it, in health and in sickness, and never taking any care of it. That is why he admitted just before he died that he had sinned much against "Brother Ass", that is, his mortal body.

One day he was near the church of Santa Maria of Portiuncula, walking alone and weeping and moaning aloud. A godly man heard him and, thinking that he was ill and in pain, was moved by compassion and asked him what ailed him. Francis replied: "I weep for the passion of my Lord Jesus Christ, and I would not be ashamed to go through the whole world lamenting loudly for His sake." Hearing these words, the other man also fell to weeping aloud with Francis. (21)

#### FRANCIS RENOUNCES HIS PATRIMONY

Filled with joy that it had been vouchsafed him to see and hear the Lord Jesus, Francis arose, fortified himself by the sign of the cross, took several pieces of different coloured cloth, mounted his horse and rode to Foligno. There he sold his horse and everything he had taken with him and returned forthwith to the church of San Damiano.

There he met the poor priest, and kissing his hand with great reverence and humility, he offered him the entire sum of money he had with him and explained his plan.

The priest, amazed and marvelling at this sudden conversion, would not believe him and, thinking that Francis was jesting, he refused to keep the money. Francis insisted pertinaciously and, to prove his good faith, he entreated the priest to let him remain with him for the love of God. This the priest agreed to do, but he would not accept the money for fear of the young man's parents,

whereupon the true scorner of money threw the coins onto the window-sill, for they meant no more to him than dust.

As he remained at this place and did not return home, his father, anxious to know what had become of him, began to seek in every direction for news of his son. When he learnt where Francis was and what a change had come over him, grief at this transformation stabbed him to the heart. He called together his friends and neighbours, and accompanied by them, he set out in great haste to fetch Francis back.

Francis, who was only a recruit in the service of Christ, hid when he heard the threats of his approaching pursuers. Hoping to escape his father's wrath, he crept into a secret cave, which he had already prepared, and during a whole month he lived there in hiding. Only one person in his father's house knew his hiding-place and sometimes brought him food which he ate secretly, (22) praying unceasingly with streaming tears that the Lord might deliver him from this persecution and look favourably upon his pious desires. . . . Though he was in darkness, the Lord filled him with joy and illumined him with a wonderful radiance. Glowing with this light, he left the cave and took the road to Assisi . . . ready to face his persecutors openly.

When those who had formerly known him saw him again, they covered him with insults, calling him a fool and a madman, and even throwing dirt and stones at him. Seeing his appearance so different from what it had been, and his body much disfigured by his mortifications, they ascribed everything he did to the fact that he was demented and his mind destroyed.

The soldier of Christ walked on unmoved; no insult could trouble him or deflect him from his purpose, and he thanked God for them all.

The noise of the crowd around him spread through the streets and squares of the town until it reached his father. Furiously he started up when he heard how his fellow-citizens were treating his son, but not so as to free him from his persecutors, no: in order to strike him down. Throwing all moderation to the winds, he rushed out like a wolf springing at a lamb, and his wild eyes staring out of his hairy face, he glared pitilessly at his son and laid rough hands on him. He dragged him into the house and threw him into a dark dungeon, where he kept him locked up for several days, attempting

with menaces and blows to break his spirit and force him to revert to the vanities of the world. (23)

But neither words nor bonds nor blows could weaken Francis in his resolve; he endured them all patiently; they served only to strengthen him in his holy purpose. Then his father was obliged to go away on urgent business; and his mother, who did not approve of what her husband was doing, reasoned with him gently and lovingly. When she realized that she could not deflect him from his godly resolve, her maternal heart was moved with pity and she freed him from his bonds and set him free.

Francis gave thanks to Almighty God and returned to the place where he had been staying. Freer than ever before, having triumphed over the pitfalls of the Evil One and passed through the trials of temptation, he now enjoyed an even greater peace of mind and pursued his way liberated and strengthened by the injuries he had sustained.

In the meantime his father returned home, and, finding Francis gone, he heaped sin on sin and poured out a flood of abuse on his wife. Then he ran to the Palazzo Communale in order to bring a charge against his son before the civic authorities. He now desired to force Francis to reimburse the money he had unlawfully taken from the house.

When the councillors saw him in this agitated state, they sent an officer to cite or summon Francis to appear before them. But he declared to the officer that, by God's grace, he was now free and under no obligation to obey the councillors, as he owed allegiance only to the Highest Lord. (24)

As the councillors were unwilling to use force, they said to his father: "As he has become a servant of God, he is no longer under our jurisdiction."

Seeing that he could do nothing through the civic authorities, the father turned to the Bishop (Guido of Assisi), in order to lodge his plaint in the ecclesiastical court.

The Bishop was a man of discretion and wisdom. In a seemly manner, he summoned Francis to appear before him and defend himself against the charge his father was bringing. Francis said to the emissary: "To the Lord Bishop I will certainly come; he is the father and liege-lord of souls."

Thus he appeared before the Bishop and was received with great rejoicing. The Bishop said to him: (25)

"Your father is angry with you, much perturbed and scandalized. Therefore, if you wish to serve God, you must give back the money you have taken. God would not want you to use this money, which has possibly been acquired dishonestly, to rebuild the church for your father's sins. His fury will abate when he gets his money back. Therefore have courage, my son, trust in the Lord, behave like a man and fear nothing: God Himself will help you and provide you in full measure with all you will need towards repairing the church."

Thereupon the servant of God rose joyfully, and, comforted by the words of the Bishop, he brought the money before him and said: "My Lord, I will gladly give back not only the money which belongs to my father, but also my raiment."

Going into the Bishop's chamber, he cast off all his garments and laying the money on the clothes before the eyes of the Bishop, his father and all who were present, he stepped naked before the door and said:

"Listen, all of you, and understand. Up to now I have called Pietro Bernardone my father, but as I am now resolved to serve God, I give him back the money about which he was so perturbed, as well as the clothes I wore which belonged to him, and from now on I will say: 'Our Father who art in Heaven' instead of 'my father Pietro Bernardone'." (26)

On that occasion it was seen that the servant of God wore a belt studded with nails next to his skin, under his many-coloured clothes.

His father arose, burning with grief and rage, and accepted the money and all the garments Francis had laid down. . . .

The Bishop had watched the servant of God attentively, and, filled with admiration for his zeal and fortitude, he embraced him, covering him with his own cloak. He saw clearly that the young man's action had been inspired by the Lord and did not doubt that the event he had just witnessed contained a great mystery. Thus from that hour onwards, the Bishop became his helper, his adviser and his comforter, guiding him and cherishing him tenderly.

## THE BEGGAR OF SAN DAMIANO

Now the servant of God Francis, stripped of everything pertaining to this world, was at liberty to serve divine justice. . . . Filled with fervent joy, he returned to San Damiano and made a hermit's robe for himself. . . . then he entered into the city<sup>1</sup> and began, as though drunk with the Holy Spirit, to praise God aloud in the streets and the squares. When he had finished his song of praise, he turned to collecting stones for the repairs of the church, saying:

"Whoever gives one stone, shall have one reward, he who gives two stones will receive a double reward, and he who gives three a treble." These and many other simple words he said in the fervour of his soul. . . .

Many there were who laughed at him, thinking that he was demented, but others were moved to tears on seeing how rapidly he had passed from wantonness and worldly vanities to so high an intoxication with divine love.

He himself scorned the ridicule and thanked God with a fervent heart.

It would take too long to relate all that he took upon himself in order to complete his task. He had been pampered in his parents' house, now he carried the stones on his own shoulders and endured all manner of hardships for the love of God. The priest, who watched his labours, often procured some special food for him, despite his poverty, for he knew how delicately he had lived in the world. . . . Francis noticed one day what the priest was doing for him; he thought it over and said to himself: "Do I expect to find, wherever I might go, this priest to use and treat me with such kindness? Surely this is not the poor man's life that I wanted. . . ." Therefore he arose one day, took a beggar's scrip and went into the city to beg for alms from door to door. People dropped scraps of different kinds of food into his bowl. . . . When he was about to eat this mess, his stomach turned, for he had never before had to look upon such food, let alone to eat it. But overcoming his loathing, he began to eat and it seemed to him that he had never

<sup>1</sup> San Damiano lies outside Assisi, towards the south, lower down on the eastern slope of the valley leading to Foligno and Spoleto.



tasted a dish more delicious. He rejoiced exceedingly to find himself able to endure such hardships gladly for the love of God, despite the weakness and exhaustion of his body, and he gave thanks to the Lord for having changed bitter into sweet and comforted him in so many ways. Therefore he asked the priest to desist in future from preparing or procuring food for him.

When his father saw him coming along in such a pitiful state, he was overcome with bitter sorrow. Dearly as he had loved him, he now felt ashamed of him and he was so grieved to see his son's flesh like dead through hardships and exposure that he would curse him whenever he saw him. The servant of God prepared against his father's curse by adopting a despised beggar [Alberto by name (27)] in his father's stead. He said to him: "Come with me, and I will share the alms I receive with you, and when you see my father cursing me, I will say to you: 'Bless me, my father.' Then you must make the sign of the cross over me and bless me in his stead." So, blessing himself by the hand of the beggar, Francis said to his father: "Do you not think that God can give me a father whose benediction can counter your maledictions?"

Then many who had mocked him began to admire him, amazed at the patience with which he endured every humiliation. . . .

In the meantime he devoted himself to rebuilding the church. And as he had resolved that the lamps were continually to be lit in it, he went through the town begging for the oil wherewith to feed them. In one house he was approaching, he saw many people collected and engaged in playing and he felt ashamed to beg before them and withdrew. But then he thought better of it, and thinking that he had sinned through this false shame, he turned back and accused himself before the whole company, telling them that he had felt ashamed to ask for alms in their presence. In his zeal he went to the house and began to beg in the Provençal tongue<sup>1</sup> that they should give him alms for the love of God, so that he might keep the lamps in the church alight.

When he and others were working at the building and people from the neighbourhood or strangers passed by, he would also say to them in Provençal: "Come and help us to build San Damiano!"

<sup>1</sup> "*Gallice*"—lit. French. Actually it was the Provençal dialect as used by the wandering minstrels. Francis is reported to have employed it later as well, when he was deeply moved, although he never possessed it perfectly.

On this holy site that praiseworthy religious community, the shining order of Poor Ladies [of St. Clare] was to be founded about six years after the conversion of St. Francis, through his influence.

#### THE LITTLE POOR MAN AND HIS EARLIEST COMPANIONS

At the time when the rebuilding of San Damiano was terminated [probably in the spring of 1208], Blessed Francis was still wearing the robe of a hermit. He went about with a staff in his hand, shoes on his feet and a leather strap which served him as a belt. One day (28) when he was attending Mass he heard the words Christ spoke to His disciples when He sent them out to preach, namely that they should "provide neither gold nor silver, nor brass in their purses, nor scrip for their journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves" (Matt. x. 9, 10). When he understood this even more exactly through the explanation of the priest, he was filled with ineffable joy. "That is it," he cried, "and I would obey it with all my soul!"

Then he committed to memory all the things he had heard and strove joyfully to carry them out, by giving away everything which he possessed twice over; he also refrained from using a staff or shoes, a purse or a scrip. He then fashioned a rough and miserable garment and girded it with a rope instead of a strap.

He had set his entire heart on realizing the words which had given him a new experience of grace; at the same time he was moved by divine inspiration to teach perfection according to the Gospels and in all simplicity to preach repentance to all and sundry. (29)

His words were neither senseless nor laughable; filled with the force of the Holy Ghost, they went to the very hearts of his hearers, so that they were amazed.

As he testified later, the Lord had revealed to him the words with which he greeted his hearers: "The Lord give you peace!" And thus, with this blessing, he began his sermons, and with this introduction he greeted the people. (30) . . . And lo, through his salutary reminder countless men became followers of true peace, men who heretofore had been far removed from salvation and not at peace with Christ.

When the truth of his pure and simple teaching and of his life had become known, it happened—two years after Blessed Francis's

conversion—that some men were seized by the desire to do penance by following his example. So they detached themselves from everything and followed him, wearing the same clothing as he and living in the same manner.

The first of these was Brother Bernard [of Quintavalle] of blessed memory. (31) Blessed Francis gave thanks to God, as he had no companion and especially because Sir Bernard was a man of great virtue and godliness . . . the Saint answered him thus: "To-morrow morning early we will go to the church and there we will learn through the Gospels how the Lord instructed His disciples."

In the morning after they had risen, they went with a third man, whose name was Peter [di Cattaneo] who desired likewise to join them, to the church of San Niccolò near the principal square of Assisi. They entered it and prayed. In their simplicity, and as they were not able to find the verse in the Holy Gospel which deals with renouncing the world, they prayed God very devoutly to show them His will by the first words they should find on opening the book. (32)

After they had prayed thus, Blessed Francis took the closed book, knelt down in front of the altar and opened it. The first thing he found was the advice of the Lord: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven" (Matt. xix. 21).

When Francis read this, his rejoicing was great and he gave thanks to the Lord God, but as his devotion to the Holy Trinity was so great, he wished to receive a threefold sign, and so he opened the book a second and a third time. The second time his eyes fell on the words: "Take nothing for your journey" (Luke ix. 3) and the third time he read: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself" (Matt. xvi. 24).

Each time that he opened the book, Blessed Francis thanked the Lord for having thus confirmed the resolution he had held in his heart so long and with so great a desire, which now had been manifested and laid upon him thrice over, and he said to the two men, Bernard and Peter:

"My brothers, this is our life and our rule and shall be so for all who wish to join our community. Go then, and act according to what you have heard!"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This happened on 16 April 1209 and represents the actual foundation of the order.

So Sir Bernard, who was very rich, went and sold all he possessed and divided the large sum of money he received among the poor of the town. Sir Peter also followed God's advice as well as he could. And when they had given everything away, they both took a habit such as the Saint himself had been wearing since he had given up the hermit's robe, and from that hour onwards they lived with him in the manner of the Holy Gospel, as the Lord had revealed it to them. Therefore St. Francis says in his testament: "The Lord revealed to me how I should live according to the teachings of Holy Gospel."

#### HOW BROTHER SILVESTER WAS CALLED. THE FIRST APOSTOLIC MISSION

When, as we have described, Sir Bernard divided his goods among the poor, Blessed Francis was there and witnessed the mighty workings of the Lord, praising God in his heart. Then a priest called Silvester came along, the same from whom Blessed Francis had bought the stones for the rebuilding of the church of San Damiano. When he saw so much money being scattered abroad at the advice of the Servant of God, he was seized by the flame of cupidity and he said to the Saint:

"Francis, you did not pay me sufficiently for the stones you bought from me!"

When the holy man who held avarice in such contempt heard this unjust accusation, he went up to Sir Bernard, put his hand into the cloak where he carried the money, and filled with zeal, pulled out a whole handful of coins which he gave to the dissatisfied priest. Thereupon he filled his hands with money a second time and said: "Have you now received sufficient payment, my lord priest?"

Silvester replied: "Yes, my brother, this suffices amply."

And the priest departed with the money and went home in great contentment.

A few days later divine enlightenment was given to the priest. He began to reflect on what Blessed Francis had done. "Am I not a miserable sinner," he said to himself, "that I should be so avid of temporal wealth at my age, whilst this young man has come to despise and scorn it through the love of God?"

During the night he had a dream in which he saw an immense

cross reaching even into the sky; it proceeded from the mouth of Blessed Francis and its transverse bars reached from one end of the world to the other.<sup>1</sup>

When he awoke, the priest understood and believed that Francis was a true friend and servant of God and that the community he was founding would spread over the whole world. Thus he began to fear the Lord and to do penance in his own house. But finally—it did not take very long—he joined the order which had been founded in the meanwhile, and there lived perfectly and died gloriously. (33)

But the servant of God Francis, accompanied, as we have said, by two friars, had no place wherein to dwell with them. So he went with them to a poor, abandoned church called Santa Maria di Portiuncula, and there they built a hut which served them as their lodging.

After a few days, a man from Assisi, by name Giles [Egidio, lat. Aegidius], came to them, and kneeling down with great reverence and devotion, he begged the servant of God to receive him in the community. Blessed Francis saw that he was most faithful and devout and that he would receive great graces from the Lord—the which then came to pass—and so he accepted him gladly.

Now they were four, and joyfully united in the Holy Spirit, they decided [in the summer of 1209] for the sake of greater advancement thus to divide their labours: Blessed Francis took Brother Giles with him and wandered to the Marches of Ancona, while the other two journeyed to another part of the country. As they were winding their way to the Marches, they rejoiced in the Lord, and the Saint sang, in a clear and ringing voice, the praises of God in the Provençal tongue, blessing and glorifying the mercy of God. The joy in their hearts was as great as though they had found a priceless treasure in the evangelical field of the Lady Poverty, for whose dear sake they had scorned all earthly things, counting them as dung, with a free and joyous heart.

At that time the Saint said to Brother Giles: "Our community

<sup>1</sup> For the interpretation of this vision see its counterpart as quoted by Bonaventure (*Leg. maj.* 3, 5). An enormous dragon is about to devour Assisi—a symbol of the destructive hatred of the parties and the ruin wrought by war. The blessings arising from St. Francis's teaching counter-balance this. It must be admitted that the change was neither as profound nor as widely spread as the Saint must have hoped.

will be like a fisherman who plunges his nets into the water and catches a great number of fishes, leaving the little ones in the water, but collecting the big ones in a jar." Thus he prophesied that the Order would spread. (34)

The servant of God was not yet preaching sermons to the people far and wide, but as he passed through cities and fortified towns, he implored all the inhabitants to love and fear God and to do penance for their sins. Brother Giles exhorted those who listened to believe him, for he was giving them most excellent counsel.

When they heard these things, the people said to each other: "Who are these men, and what are these words they speak?"

For at that time the love and fear of God had died out all over the country, no man knew the way of contrition, which was held to be mere foolishness. The temptations of the flesh, the cupidity of the world and the pride of life had grown so strong that one could have thought that the whole world was subjected to these three evil forces.

So it happened that people had diverse opinions about these followers of the Gospel. Some said that they were mad or drunk, others maintained that words such as they spoke could not proceed from crazed minds. But one of the listeners said: "Either this is true perfection, and they are really following the Lord, or they must certainly be insane. One can see that they live a desperately miserable life: eating exceedingly little, walking about barefoot and dressing most wretchedly."

At that time some were afraid, seeing their holy manner of life, and no one followed them as yet. And when women or young maidens saw them from a distance, they fled in fear and trembling lest they might be carried away by their foolishness and madness.

When they had wandered through that province, they returned to Santa Maria. A few days later they were joined by three new companions, men of Assisi also: Sabbatino, Morico, and Giovanni di Capella. They begged to be admitted as friars, and Blessed Francis received them humbly and benignly. But when they went through the town begging alms, hardly anyone would give them anything; they were reproached for having given away their own substance and now living on the bounty of strangers, and so they suffered severe want. Even their own parents and relations persecuted them and others in the town laughed at them, saying they

were crazy and foolish. For in those days no man had ever given away his possessions and begged for alms at the doors of strangers. (35)

The Bishop of Assisi, whose counsel the Servant of God frequently sought, always received him with great kindness, but he said to him: "It seems to me that your life is very hard and difficult if you may possess no earthly goods." The Saint answered: "My Lord, if we were to possess anything, we would have to have arms for our protection, for from having possessions arises all strife, and in many ways they hinder us from loving God and our neighbours; therefore we do not wish to own any temporal thing in the world."

These words of the Servant of God pleased the Bishop exceedingly. Francis despised all transient things, and most especially money, so much that he laid great stress on poverty in all the rules he laid down, and exhorted the brethren above all things to have nothing to do with money. Thus he said in one of the rules treating of the scorn in which money should be held:

"Let us take care, we who have forsaken the whole world, that we do not lose the Kingdom of Heaven for so pitiable a thing! If we should find money anywhere, let us heed it no more than the dust under our feet!"

## THE SECOND APOSTOLIC MISSION

Now Blessed Francis was filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, and he called together the six friars he had at that time and foretold the things that were to come. . . . "You will find some men who are faithful, merciful and kind, they will welcome you and your preaching with joy. But you will find far more who are ungodly, proud and blasphemous; they will insult you and persecute you and refuse to listen to your words. Therefore be prepared in your hearts to endure everything with patience and humility!" . . .

. . . He blessed them, and the men of God set forth [in autumn 1209] and acted according to his counsel. When they came upon a church or a crucifix they knelt to pray and said fervently: "We adore Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, and praise Thee for all the churches of the universe, for through Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world." For wherever they found a crucifix or a church, they saw God's dwelling-place there.

They occasioned great surprise in all who saw them, because they were so different from everybody else in their dress and their way of life, seeming almost like men from the woods. But wherever they came to, be it a city or a fortified town, a village or a house, they proclaimed the tidings of peace. And they encouraged all men to love and fear the Creator of heaven and earth and to obey His commandments.

Many heard them gladly, others laughed them to scorn, but most people importuned them with questions, some saying: "Where have you come from?" others again asking to which Order they belonged. And although it was wearisome to give answers to all the questions, they admitted in all simplicity that they were penitents from the town of Assisi. For at that time the devout community was not yet called an Order. . . .(36)

At that time two of their number [Bernard and Giles] were in Florence. They had been unable to find a lodging when they wandered begging through the streets; at last they found themselves in front of a house with a portico, and a stove under the arcades, and they said to each other: "Here we shall be able to spend the night." They begged the mistress of the house to grant them a lodging under her roof, and she refused; then they asked her humbly to let them rest that night near the stove, and to this she made no objection.

When the woman's husband came home, he said to her: "Why have you allowed these scoundrels to install themselves under our portico?" She answered that she had refused to take them into the house, but had permitted them to lie down under the portico, where there was nothing they could steal except some wood. Her husband forbade her to lend them blankets, although it was very cold, for he thought they were thieves and vagabonds.

At the end of that night, during which they lay in truly temperate slumbers near the oven, warmed by the glow of Divine Love and wrapped in the blankets of the Lady Poverty, they went to the nearest church to hear matins. In the morning, the woman of the house went to the church, and when she saw the friars absorbed in fervent prayer she said to herself: "If these men were really scoundrels and thieves, as my husband said, they would not remain so long at their devotions."



While she was thinking these things, a man of the name of Guido was giving alms to the poor in the church. When he came to the friars, he was about to give them the same amount as he had given the others, but they refused, saying that they would not take the money.

"Why not?" he asked. "As you are poor men, you could accept the money as the others do!"

Brother Bernard answered: "It is true that we are poor, but poverty is not as hard for us as it is for other poor men, because we have become poor by our own free will, through the grace of God and by His counsel. . . ." When she saw the friars refuse the money, the woman thought it over in her heart and approached them, telling them that she would gladly receive them if they would accept her hospitality. They answered humbly: "May God reward you for your good will!"

Then the aforesaid man . . . led them to his house . . . and rendering thanks to God, they stayed there for several days, encouraging him by word and deed in the fear of the Lord, so that from then on he gave very much to the poor. (37)

### THE SAINTS

The people saw how the brothers exulted in the midst of their trials, how zealously and devoutly they lived for prayer and good works, how they would neither accept money nor carry it with them, and how they loved each other with true brotherly charity, thus proving themselves to be true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then many came to them filled with remorse and entreated their forgiveness for having insulted them. . . . And some asked the brothers to admit them into their community. . . .

All day long they applied themselves to prayer and manual labour, so as to banish all manner of idleness, the enemy of the soul, from their midst. They arose from their beds in the middle of the night and prayed from the fullness of their hearts, shedding many tears: they were united by love, and each one served the other and cherished him as a mother cherishes her only and beloved son.

Charity flamed so brightly in their hearts that it seemed easy to them to risk their lives, not only for the love of Christ but also for

the spiritual and corporal welfare of their brethren. . . . Those among them who were distinguished by a position of authority or by some special gift behaved with even greater humility than the others. And all of them lived in perfect obedience and were ever ready to submit their will to that of their superiors. . . .

They abstained from carnal desires, judging themselves strictly and watching that none should give offence to another in any way. If it happened that a brother said something to another which might perturb him, it was a constant prick to his conscience and he could find no peace until he had confessed his transgression to the one he had offended, throwing himself humbly at his feet and asking him to place his foot upon his mouth. And if the brother who had been offended refused, he would command him to do it in the name of obedience if he had authority over him, and if he was under obedience to him, he would ask one in authority to bid him do it. In this manner they endeavoured to banish rancour and malice and to maintain true and perfect love among themselves. . . .

They claimed nothing as their own property, but used the books and everything they had need of in common, according to the rule handed down and observed by the Apostles. Truly as they observed the rule of poverty, they were liberal and generous with all the things that had been given them for the love of God. For Christ's sake they gladly gave succour to all who asked them, but more especially to the poor, out of the alms they received. . . . And if they had nothing by them to give away, they would give them part of their raiment, wretched though it was. Sometimes they gave away the cowl, cutting it off from the habit, sometimes the sleeve, so that they might follow the precepts of the Gospel: "Give to every man that asketh of thee" (Luke vi. 30). . . .

When the rich of this world deigned to come to them, they received them willingly and kindly, endeavouring to turn their hearts away from evil and move them to repentance. They begged earnestly not to be sent to the places where they were born, so as to avoid the familiar intercourse of their own kindred, and thus to carry out the prophetic words: "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children" (Ps. lxxix. 8).

In poverty they sought all their satisfaction, for they had no desire for the riches of the world and despised all transient things

that the lovers of this world desire, most especially money, which they held in as little esteem as the dust under their feet, and, as the Saint had taught them, valued it no more than an ass's dung.

They continually rejoiced in the Lord, for there was nothing which might have given them cause for sadness. The more detached they became from the world, the more closely they became united to God. They trod the way of the cross and the path of righteousness; they cleared away the obstacles from the narrow path of repentance and evangelical obedience, so as to make the way smooth and safe for those who followed them.

### ST. FRANCIS IN ROME

When (38) Blessed Francis saw how his brethren were increasing in numbers and in virtue—there were now twelve friars in all (39)—men of great spiritual strength whose minds were set on the same goal—he, being the twelfth, told the other eleven as their leader and father: "I see, my brothers, how God in His mercy wishes to increase our congregation. Let us go therefore to our mother, the Holy Roman Church, and notify the Supreme Pontiff of what the Lord has begun to work through us, so that we may continue according to His will and His bidding."

The brethren having all consented to the words of the father, when they were on their way to the Papal court Blessed Francis said to them: "Let us elect one of our number as our leader, and look upon him as the representative of Jesus Christ; we will then follow him on whichever path he chooses to take, and into whichever house he chooses to enter."

And they chose Brother Bernard, the first after Blessed Francis, and they did as their father had said, and went along their way very happily. . . .

When they arrived in Rome, they met the Bishop of Assisi, and were welcomed by him with great rejoicing, for he honoured Blessed Francis and all the friars with great affection. Yet as he did not know the reason of their coming, he was at first much alarmed,<sup>1</sup> thinking that they were planning to leave their native town, where

<sup>1</sup> Most probably Francis and his companions chose the time when they knew the Bishop would be in Rome to come there, in the hopes that he would further their cause.

the Lord had begun to do such great things through them. . . . But when he had heard what they asked and understood their plans, he was very glad and promised to advise them and further their affairs.

The Bishop knew the Cardinal-Bishop of Sabina, the Lord Giovanni [Colonna] of San Paolo, a man truly filled with divine grace, who had a great love for all servants of God. . . . (40)

The said cardinal went to the curia and said to Pope Innocent III: "I have found a most excellent man who desires to live according to the precepts of Holy Gospel and to observe evangelical perfection in all things. I believe that God wishes to reform the faithful of Holy Church in the whole world through him." The Pope marvelled greatly and bade the cardinal bring Blessed Francis before him.

So it happened that on the following day the Servant of God was presented by the aforesaid cardinal to the Supreme Pontiff, to whom he discovered all his designs. As the Pope was gifted with great wisdom, he consented, according to the divine decree, to all the Saint's wishes and desires. He also gave good counsel to the brethren and blessed them, speaking these words: "Go with God, my brothers, and as He will show you in His great mercy, preach repentance<sup>1</sup> to all men. And if Almighty God sees fit to increase your numbers and add to the grace He gives you, then report to us, and we will entrust to you greater things and with greater confidence."

As the Pope was earnestly desirous to know whether what he had conceded and would still concede was according to God's will, he said to the Saint before he dismissed him, as well as to his friars: "My dear sons, your life appears most hard and rude to us; although we believe your fervour to be so great that we have no reason to doubt you, we must consider those who will come after you, lest the way appear too steep for them." But seeing the constancy of their faith and how deeply anchored in Christ was their hope, so that they would not waver in their fervour, he said to Blessed Francis: "My son, go and pray God to reveal to you whether what you ask is indeed inspired by His will, so that we, knowing the will of God, may consent to your wishes."

<sup>1</sup> "To preach repentance" meant to preach the renewal of faith and morals. It is self-evident that Francis and his companions, having no training in theology, had no intention of preaching dogmatic sermons; their mission was expressly limited to "preaching repentance", as H. Felder explains. (41) The dictates of prudence caused the Pope to withhold his official approbation for the moment, and to wait for further developments of the missionary brotherhood.

When the Saint was praying, as the Pope had bidden him do, God spoke to him in spirit by a parable as follows: "A poor and beautiful maiden lived in a desert; a great king, seeing her beauty, desired to wed her, thinking she would bear him splendid sons. The marriage was contracted and consummated, and many sons were born to them. When they grew up, their mother said to them: 'My children, do not be bashful, for you are the king's sons, but go to his court, and he will give you all you ask.' When they came before the king, he marvelled at their beauty and recognized his own image in them. He said to them: 'Whose sons are you?' whereupon they replied that they were the sons of the poor woman who lived in the desert. The king embraced them with great joy, saying: 'Fear nothing, for you are my sons! If strangers are provided for at my board, how much more so you, who are my legitimate offspring.' And the king bade the aforesaid woman send the sons she had borne him to his court, so that he might provide for them." These things were shown to Blessed Francis while he prayed, and the holy man understood that he himself was meant by that poor woman.

When he had ended his devotions, he presented himself before the Pope and related the parable that God had shown him, explaining what it signified. . . .

When the Pope heard all this, he was much amazed, especially as he himself had been shown in a vision, before the arrival of Blessed Francis, that the church of San Giovanni Laterano [*near which he resided*] was falling in ruins and threatening to collapse, but a religious of poor and contemptible aspect was supporting it on his back. He woke up astonished and alarmed and, as he was a discreet and wise man, he pondered on what meaning this dream might have for him.

A few days later Blessed Francis had come to him, revealing his plan, as we have related above, and asked him to confirm the Rule which he had written down in simple words (42) and texts from the Holy Gospels, whose counsels of perfection he tried to follow wholeheartedly. The Pope, seeing his zeal and remembering his own dream, compared it with the aforesaid parable which had been shown to the servant of God, and he began to say to himself: "Surely, this is the holy religious through whom God's church will be upheld and supported!"

So he embraced Blessed Francis and confirmed the Rule he had

set down and also licensed him and his friars to preach repentance in all places, yet so that every friar who wished to preach must obtain the licence from Blessed Francis. And this was approved by the consistory.

Saint Francis gave thanks to God for this authority, and kneeling down before the Pope, he promised him obedience and reverence most humbly and devoutly, and the other brethren, at the Pope's bidding, likewise vowed obedience and reverence to Blessed Francis.

### THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

From then on Blessed Francis wandered through cities and fortified towns and began to preach everywhere. Not with enticing words of human wisdom, but in the doctrine and virtue of the Holy Spirit he proclaimed the Kingdom of God with great confidence; as a true preacher, confirmed by Apostolic authority, he never used flattering words and he despised all blandishments; what he preached to others in words, he had first experienced by deeds, so that he might speak the truth faithfully.

The power and truth of his language, which no man had taught him, made even cultured and learned men marvel, and many hastened to see him and hear him, as though he were a man of another century. Then in ever increasing numbers men of the people, nobles and commoners, clerics and laymen, inflamed by divine inspiration, began to follow in Blessed Francis's footsteps, and putting away all the cares and pomps of the world, placed their lives under his direction.

At first the father continued to dwell with his sons at a place near Assisi, by name Rivotorto, where there stood a derelict, abandoned hut; the space therein was so cramped that they could hardly sit or lie down; often they lacked bread and lived only on turnips, the which, in their poverty, they obtained by begging here and there. The servant of God wrote the names of the friars on the boards of the hut, so that each one might find his place when he wished to rest or to pray and that no unnecessary noise, occasioned by their restricted quarters, should disturb the quiet of their souls.

One day, during the time the brethren were staying at this place, it happened that a peasant arrived with his ass and wanted to shelter

there. Coming in with his animal, he said to it, as though to forestall any protest by the friars: "Come inside, this place will be the better for our arrival!" Hearing these words and understanding the man's intentions, the blessed father was sorely troubled, especially as the peasant and his ass were making a great noise and disturbing all the friars, who were just engaged in meditation. So the servant of God said: "I know, dear brothers, that God did not call us to give hospitality to an ass and frequent men's society; in order that we might at all hours preach the way of salvation to our fellows and give them salutary counsel, we must insist before all things on peace for silent prayer and the operation of grace."

So they left the hut to the use of the poor lepers and moved to Santa Maria di Portiuncula, where they lived in a little house before they were given the church itself. Later the abbot of the Benedictines of Monte Subasio near Assisi was inspired by God to hand over the church to Blessed Francis,<sup>(43)</sup> who accepted it with great humility and recommended it notably and affectionately to the General of the Order, his successor, and to all the brethren, because of all shrines and churches it was most dear to the glorious Virgin.

#### THE GENERAL MEETING OF THE ORDER, HELD TWICE A YEAR AT SANTA MARIA DI PORTIUNCULA

When Blessed Francis had received the afore-mentioned church from the abbot [1211], he decided that a meeting should be held there twice a year, at Whitsuntide and on St. Michael's Day [29 September].

At Whitsuntide all the friars assembled at Santa Maria; they discussed how they might follow the Rule more perfectly and ordained which friars should go to the different provinces to preach to the people and assign the other friars to their posts in the provinces.

St. Francis gave them admonishments, reprimands and commands, according to what he understood to be God's will. Everything he told them in words he demonstrated lovingly and solicitously by deeds.

He venerated the prelates and priests of Holy Church, and honoured old age, noble birth and wealth, but his real love went

out to the poor, and his heart was filled with great compassion for them. He deferred to them all with great humility.

Although he stood high above all the other friars, he set one of them above himself as his Guardian and Superior, obeying him humbly and devoutly, so as to put away every occasion for pride. He bowed his head to the ground before his fellows, so that he might deserve to be raised one day among the saints and the elect of God before the divine countenance.

He zealously admonished the brethren to be firm in the observance of the Rule which they had embraced, and of the Holy Gospels, to be reverent and devout at divine offices and ecclesiastical ordinations, assisting at Mass and adoring the Body of Our Lord with great devotion. The friars were to show especial reverence to priests carrying sacred things and especially the Sacrament; wherever they met such an one, they were to bow down before him and to kiss not only his hand, but the hoof of the horse that carried him, out of reverence for the power delegated to him.

He admonished his brothers never to pass judgment, nor to speak scornfully of men who live in luxury and dress with great magnificence, saying: "God is above us and above them; He may call them and also justify them" [Rom. viii. 30]. He wished the friars to treat such men with like reverence as they would treat their own brothers and masters; "they are our brothers," he said, "for they have the same Creator as we, and they are our masters, because they help the devout to become penitents by ministering to the needs of their bodies."

And to these counsels he would add: "The bearing of the friars towards the people should be such that all who see or hear them should be moved to glorify and praise our Heavenly Father." For this was his greatest desire, that he and his brethren should abound in works for which men praise God.

He said to them: "When you proclaim peace by your words, you must carry an even greater peace in your hearts. Let none be provoked to anger by you, nor be scandalized, but let your gentleness encourage all men to peace, good will and mutual love. For we are called to heal the wounded, to tend the maimed and to bring home those who have lost their way—for many who to-day seem to us children of the devil will also be disciples of Christ."



The good father was not pleased with his brothers when they were too hard towards themselves, mortifying their bodies excessively with night-watches, fasting and scourging. There was one who had mortified himself so severely in order to repress all the natural urges of the flesh that he appeared to hate himself. This the servant of God prohibited, admonishing him kindly and reprimanding him rationally, and he eased their wounds with the balm of his precepts.

Not one of the friars who came to attend the Chapter (44) would have dared to speak of secular matters. They spoke about the lives of the saints of old and what they might do to advance to greater perfection in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And if perchance one of the brothers was undergoing an inner struggle or fighting against a temptation, it sufficed for him to see St. Francis, to hear him speak with loving zeal, to witness the sacrifices he made—and all temptations and all sadness miraculously vanished, for he spoke to them with great compassion, not as a judge, but as a loving father to his sons or a good physician to his patients. . . . Nevertheless he did not fail to correct all who erred according to their deserts, and to impose discipline on those who were contumacious and rebellious.

At the end of the Chapter he would bless all the friars and assign to each his province. . . .

To every one who possessed the Holy Spirit and the eloquence necessary for preaching, be he cleric or layman, he would give licence to preach. Then, having received his benediction, they departed in great gladness of spirit, going into the world as aliens and strangers, taking nothing on their way except the books from which they said their offices. Wherever they met a priest, be he rich or poor, good or bad, they bowed down in humility and showed him reverence. When it was time to seek shelter for the night, they would rather seek it with priests than with laymen, but if they could not be given hospitality by the priest, they would ask for it in the houses of spiritual and godfearing people where they could stay in an honourable manner. This continued to be their custom until God inspired devout men in different cities and towns to erect hostels for the use of the brethren.

## Thomas of Celano

### INTRODUCTORY

THOMAS OF CELANO was the first officially-recognized biographer of St. Francis and is also known as the author of the *Dies irae*. The Saint himself admitted him into the community early in 1214, while he was still a youth; in 1221 he took part in the mission to Germany under Caesarius von Speyer, and he returned to his native country in 1227, if not earlier. After the canonization of the founder of the Order in 1228, Pope Gregory IX commanded him to write the life of St. Francis, and he delivered the finished work on 25 February of the following year. (1)

Celano possessed great literary gifts and mastered the art of presenting historical truth in a fine Latin style modelled on the classics and with good taste, although he is not free from a certain rhetorical redundancy and affectation, owing to the ecclesiastical unctuousness which was expected of him. In 1246 he was entrusted with the task of writing a second official biography of St. Francis, as the need had arisen to fill up certain gaps in the first biography. For instance, he had made no mention whatever of the closest companions of the Saint, although "they were known to all men in Umbria". (2) Furthermore, it had become necessary to modify the fulsome praise he had lavished on St. Francis's successor, the General of the Order, Brother Elias, as the latter had lost the favour of Pope Gregory IX since he had embraced the cause of the Emperor.

As I have already mentioned in the introduction to Part I, the close companions of the Saint who were still alive gave their assistance unstintingly to the biographer. It must be admitted that Celano availed himself wholeheartedly of their material (naturally using the testimonies of other witnesses as well) (3) and made no attempt to slur over their frank statements about the Saint's attitude to poverty and book-learning; this was later to bring about his downfall, as will be seen in Part III.

Sabatier, in his dislike of what he calls Celano's "opportunist policy", made a mistake in assuming that the reports of the Three

Companions were first submitted to "emendations and abridgments" by the authorities and their confidential agent Celano in order to conceal the real truth. Such things have occurred only too frequently, and the Three Companions were to suffer under this policy in later years, but Celano was evidently permitted to use what he liked of the available material. The Companions themselves, in the letter mentioned above, praise his faithfulness and veracity, and his new work proves that he performed his part of the task with admirable sincerity. Without a thought that they might disavow him, he spoke in the name of his collaborators in his preface to the *Second Life*, actually using phrases that seem to fit them better than himself, such as: "We, who were permitted to know him better than others through mutual confidence and daily companionship, write of the deeds and saying of our glorious father Francis . . . although our memory is only that of untutored men." At the end of the book the author joins with his assistants in a "Prayer of the Companions", which expressed the unity of their ideas and hopes. Taking it by and large, the ancient, spiritually-minded chronicler Salimbene forestalled the results of modern research when he called the second biography by Celano (even as regards its fidelity to St. Francis's ideals) "a most beautiful book".<sup>(4)</sup> Thomas of Celano was only implicated in the subsequent fate of the manuscripts of the Three Companions in so far as he was affected by it himself.

The second *Vita* was written between 12 August 1246 (the day on which the Three Companions delivered the material set down by them) and June 1247, when the finished work was handed in to the Pope.

With equal good taste and intelligence, Celano wrote a *Tract of Miracles* (1250-3), and at the behest of Pope Alexander IV a biography of St. Clare (1255-6) from which we have taken those parts which cast light on the connection between the story of Clare and the life of St. Francis. The Legend of St. Clare was also written in close collaboration with Brother Leo.

## THE LIFE OF ST. FRANCIS AFTER HIS CONVERSION

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE SAINT; HIS PERSONALITY (5)

## I

(Celano, *Second Life*, I, 4, 5)

Francis had always shown especial tenderness for the poor, and holy beginnings indicated what he was later to become in such perfection. He had often divested himself of his garments to clothe the poor, striving to become like them with whom he identified himself in his heart, though not yet in actual fact.

Once, when he was in Rome on a pilgrimage, (6) he put off his own delicate raiment for love of poverty and put on the clothes of a beggar. Thus attired, he joined the beggars in the "paradiso" (a square surrounded by colonnades in front of St. Peter's), sat down gaily in their midst and, as though imagining himself one of them, began to beg most eagerly. He would often have done this, had he not been ashamed of being seen by his acquaintances.

When he came to the altar of the Prince of the Apostles, he was amazed to see what small gifts the pilgrims laid down there. So he threw down his money by the handful, so as to show that he whom God had raised above all others should be given highest honour by men. . . . Under his secular garb he was already a religious at heart, shunning the world and fleeing to solitary places, where he often received the consolations of the Holy Spirit. He was lifted out of himself and experienced the supreme sweetness which had inundated him so mightily from the beginning, and which never left him again as long as he lived.

Yet while he frequented solitary places conducive to prayer and meditation, the devil attempted with wicked artifices to deflect him from his purpose. He placed before the holy man's imagination a monstrously ugly old woman of Assisi, whose aspect made everyone shudder, and threatened him that he would become like her if he did not give up what he had begun. But the Lord of salvation comforted him, and he listened joyfully to a locution full of grace. God said to him: "Francis, you must turn your heart from what you

have heretofore loved carnally and vainly, recognize the treasures of the spirit, and, finding sweetness in bitterness, count yourself as naught, if you would know me. . . .”

## 2

(*First Life*, I, 4)

Thus when he had been fortified by the Holy Spirit and the time of fulfilment had come for him, the blessed servant of the Highest entered into the dispositions to follow the call of his heart, which led him away from all earthly things to the supreme good.

## 3

(*First Life*, I, 8, 10)

The first thing Blessed Francis undertook when he was free from the power of his corporal father was to restore the house of God [the church of S. Damiano]—not that he desired to build the church anew from the foundations up, he was content to repair the ruined building.

During this time he changed the manner of his dress. After he had repaired the above-mentioned church, he turned to another place near Assisi (San Pietro) where he undertook to rebuild the little church which was almost entirely in ruins; here too he did not waver from his good intention until he had completed the work. From there he went to a third place, which is called Portiuncula. Long ago a church had been erected there in honour of the Blessed Virgin, but it had likewise been abandoned and no one cared for it. When the Saint saw this edifice in such a sad state, he was moved by devout pity, and his devotion to the Mother of all mercy was so great that he chose it as his abiding dwelling-place. During the third year after his change of heart he had also repaired this church.

One day when he was hearing Mass in this church, he heard the words of the Gospel with which Our Lord sent His disciples out to preach. . . . And he understood that the followers of Christ should

take neither gold nor silver nor other money with them, neither scrip nor bread nor staves for their journey, that they should possess neither shoes nor two garments, but should proclaim the kingdom of God and preach repentance.

Then, seized by the Holy Spirit, he rejoiced and cried out: "This is what I want, this is what I seek, this I will do with all my heart!" And overflowing with happiness, the Servant of God immediately began to put into practice the godly counsel he had heard. . . . With great zeal and in a joyful spirit he began from then on to preach repentance to all and sundry.

He spoke in a homely fashion, but his words came from the fullness of his heart and moved all who listened to him. His speech was like a glowing flame that struck deep into all hearts and filled all who heard him with great admiration. One could feel that he had become an entirely different man from what he had been before; his eyes, turned to heaven, seemed no longer to take in the things of the earth.

By a strange dispensation he began to preach on the very spot where he had learnt to read as a child, and where he was later to find his first glorious resting-place.

## THE APOSTLE

### 4

(1 *Cel.*, I, 27)

The Servant of God was given the grace never to seek his own profit, but before all else those things which he recognized as salutary for the souls of his fellow-men. It was his greatest desire "to depart, and to be with Christ" (Phil. i. 23).

Insensible to all things that appear with noise and turmoil, he kept a sharp curb on his senses and contained his emotions, so as to hold himself open to God alone.

His nest was in "the clefts of the rock", his habitation in "the hollows of the wall" (Cant. II. 14). In blissful meditation he would seek abandoned dwelling-places, and when he had emptied his mind of all distractions he would rest in the wounds of Our Saviour. He

often stayed in hermitages, so as to unite his soul wholly to God. Yet with all that he never hesitated, when he found a good opportunity, to perform some labour and to devote himself to the good of his neighbour. . . .

When he came forward to preach the word of God to many thousands, he would bear himself with like confidence as when he spoke to one familiar companion. He looked upon the greatest crowd as on a single man, and with every man he would speak with as much care and attention as though he had a great multitude before him.

His fearlessness in preaching flowed out of his singlemindedness; he would speak without taking much thought, yet in a manner that seemed unheard of and wonderful to all who listened. Sometimes he had thought out beforehand what he was going to preach about, but when he stepped out in front of the people he could not remember anything and, as he did not know what to say, he would confess openly to his hearers that he had thought out many things, but could no longer remember any of them—and then a flood of such eloquence would pour out of the fullness of his heart that his listeners were amazed. Yet it might also happen that he was unable to speak at all, then he would give the multitudes his blessing and dismiss them, and they felt as though they had heard the most eloquent sermon.

## 5

(2 *Cel.*, II, 72, 73)

In the Marches of Ancona there dwelt a man of the world [Guglielmo Divini] who, forgetful of his own soul and ignorant of God, abandoned himself entirely to earthly vanities. He was called the King of Verse, for he was a master among the singers of love-songs and the composer of many secular rhymes. His worldly fame was such that the Emperor had crowned him with great pomp. . . .(7)

By a dispensation of Providence this man met St. Francis in a convent of Poor Ladies [in S. Severino, spring 1213].(8) Blessed Francis had come with his companions to visit his spiritual daughters, and the poet, with several friends, was visiting a kinswoman of his.

The man was touched by the hand of God. With his bodily eyes he saw St. Francis signed with a cross of two bright, flashing swords; one sword descended from his head to his feet, the other lay across his breast from arm to arm. He had never seen Blessed Francis before, but by this sign he recognized him at once. . . . In his sermon to the people, the Saint turned the sword of the word of God directly against this man. Later, he reminded him of the vanity of all earthly things, admonishing him to despise the world, and then he pierced him to the heart with the threat of God's judgment.

Thereupon the poet exclaimed incontinently: "Let us come to facts! I ask you to remove me from all others and restore me to the highest Lord." On the following day the Saint vested him, and, because he had led him to the peace of God, he called him "Pacifico". This conversion was an occasion for great edification, owing to the large number of this man's boon companions.(9)

When Francis the evangelist preached to untutored men, he used homely, material images, for he knew that the power of conviction is more important than the words. At the same time, he was able to speak in admirable and profound language to spiritual men, susceptible to such things. He could convey the ineffable in brief words, and his fiery movements and gestures transported his hearers towards heaven. He never employed dialectical subtleties, for he gave no place in his sermons to reasonings he had not arrived at himself. Christ gave his voice the note of power, truth and wisdom.

A student of physics, a well-read and eloquent man, once said of him: "With other preachers I can remember the sermons word for word, but the discourses that burst forth from St. Francis escape my memory; even when I commit some of his words to memory, they no longer seem to me to be the same that were distilled from his lips."

Inflamed by divine love, our blessed Father Francis was ever desirous to turn his hand to great works, and whilst he was hastening



along the way of God's law, he longed to attain the summit of perfection.

In the sixth year of his new life [1212] he decided, in his longing to attain the crown of martyrdom, to go to Syria, and preach repentance to the Saracens and other infidels. But the ship which was to sail there was driven off by ill winds to the shores of Slavonia, where he and the other passengers went on land. Seeing his hopes disappointed, he begged some mariners who were about to sail to Ancona to take him with them, but they refused as he had no money to pay his passage. Thereupon the Saint and one companion went on board secretly, trusting in the mercy of the Lord.

Then the Servant of God turned once again from the sea to the land, wandering over wide stretches and ploughing them with the ploughshare of God's word and scattering the seed of life towards a blessed harvest. Many excellent men, clerics and laymen, left the world and followed the Saint, making mock of the Evil One and strong in the grace of God.

Yet although he wrought such great things everywhere he went, his constant longing was for martyrdom and his ardent desire for it was in no way quenched. After a little while [in the autumn of 1213] he started out for Morocco, in order to preach the gospel to the Sultan Miramamolín (10) and his court. So mightily was he driven forward by his zeal that he often left his companion behind. Yet God stepped across his path, for as soon as he had arrived in Spain a sickness was sent to him so that he could proceed no further and had to relinquish the journey he had begun. . . .

Nevertheless he would not rest until he could follow the holy urge of his spirit. In the thirteenth year of his new life [1219] he travelled [with a large company of brethren to join the crusaders] towards Syria, where bitter fighting was taking place every day between the Christians and the infidels.

Fearlessly he ventured, with one companion [Brother Illuminato] to present himself to the Sultan of the Saracens [Melek al Khamil of Egypt]. Who can describe the courage with which he confronted the Sultan, the wisdom of his discourse and the eloquence and confidence with which he answered those who scoffed at Christianity? Before he had come to the Sultan, the soldiers seized him and heaped

scorn and insults on him, but he feared neither their blows nor the death with which they threatened him. . . .

And it happened that although he had to endure much hardship on the way, the Sultan received him with great deference. He even offered him high honours and precious gifts, thinking to impress him with such splendour. When he saw that all this made no more impression on Francis than so much dung, he was not a little surprised, and recognized that he possessed something different from the common run of men; touched profoundly by his words, he listened to him willingly. Yet with all this the Saint's longing was not fulfilled. The Lord held another grace in store for him.<sup>1</sup>(11)

## ST. FRANCIS'S CHARITY; HIS LOVE OF NATURE

### 7

(1 *Cel.*, I, 28)

Francis the poor man was the father of the poor; he wished to be like every beggar and was saddened if he met one who was even poorer than he; he was not moved by the love of renown, but by pure charity.

<sup>1</sup> This refers to St. Francis's mystical experience on Mount Alverna. This whole episode is confirmed by two statements of Jacques de Vitry, who accompanied the Crusaders' army and described the unexpected appearance of St. Francis and his companions as follows:

(a) In a letter dated March 1220, from Damietta: "Their [the Franciscans'] master, who had founded their order, came to our army, and, fired by missionary zeal, he went to the camp of the Saracens and preached the word of God to the Saracens for many days. Yet he had but little success. Still the Sultan, the King of Egypt, asked him to pray to God that he might be enlightened to follow the religion that was most pleasing to Him."

(b) In his *History of the East* (II, 32): "We saw the founder and master of the order, whom all the others obeyed as their supreme leader. He is a simple man without great scholarship, but God and men love him. We saw him so inflamed by the fire of the spirit, drunken with ecstasy, that after his arrival among the ranks of the Christian army lying before Damietta he went fearlessly into the camp of the Sultan of Egypt, armed only with the shield of faith. When the Saracens seized him on the way, he said: 'I am a Christian, take me to your master.' And they led him before the Sultan. That cruel monster was transformed into a mild man when he saw the Saint, and he listened to him for several days while he preached the words of Christ to him and his court. Yet finally he was afraid lest some of his followers might be converted to the Lord through his eloquence, and so he had him sent back in safety and with all honours to our camp, saying as he dismissed him: 'Pray for me that God may deign to reveal to me the law and the faith which pleases Him most!' The Saracens always listen willingly to the Minor Brothers as long as they speak to them about the Christian faith and the teachings of the gospels, until they speak of Mohammed as a false prophet. Then they are cruelly ill-treated, and were it not for the Lord's miraculous protection, they would all have been flung half dead outside the realm of the Saracens." (12)

Poor and rough as his habit was, he would yet gladly share it with a beggar. And so that he, who felt so rich in his poverty, might more easily help the needy in his charity, he would ask the rich to give him a mantle of furs when it was very cold; and when they were kind and gave him willingly what he asked, he would say to them: "I only want to accept this from you on condition that you do not demand it back again!" Then he would go on his way until he met a beggar, whom he would then gleefully and triumphantly clothe in the garment he had received.

Often, when he met poor people carrying bundles of wood or other burdens, he would relieve them of their load and take it on his own shoulders, weak though he was.

Not only poor men and women experienced his gentle love and charity, he extended it to the dumb and senseless creatures, to all birds and beasts, to every sentient thing and even to insensible objects. Among the animals, his tenderness went out most especially to the lambs, because the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ is symbolized in the scriptures under the form of a lamb. . . .

Once he was journeying through the Marches of Ancona, having preached the word of the Lord in that town; he was going towards Osimo, accompanied by Brother Paolo, when he met a shepherd in the fields, guarding a herd of goats. Among all these animals there was a single lamb that followed them humbly, grazing peacefully by itself. When St. Francis saw this, he stopped and pity filled his heart. He sighed and said to Brother Paolo: "Do you see that lamb over there, how meekly it walks among the goats? Just as gently and humbly our Lord Jesus Christ walked among the Pharisees and the high priests. Come, my son, let us be merciful for His sake and buy this lamb, so that we may remove it from the company of the goats!"

Brother Paolo marvelled at his charity and was touched by it in his own heart. But the Saint and his companion had nothing by them except the miserable garments they wore, and they feared lest they should be unable to pay the price for the lamb. At that moment a merchant came along and offered to pay what the shepherd asked. Thanking God, they took the lamb and came to Osimo with it. There they went to the house of the Bishop of the town and were

received with great reverence. The Lord Bishop wondered that the Servant of God should lead this lamb about, and that he should show it such affection. But the Saint spoke to him about the lamb in a long parable, so that he was deeply moved by the simplicity of his heart.

When Francis proceeded on his way the next day, he wondered what he should do with the lamb. The brother who accompanied him suggested giving it to the convent of San Severino, where the nuns would look after it. They accepted it as a great gift from God most gladly and kept it for a long time. They sheared its wool and wove a habit out of it, which they sent to Blessed Father Francis, just at the time when the meeting of the order was being held at Santa Maria di Portiuncula. The Saint received this gift with great reverence and spiritual joy, kissed it and bade all who were present rejoice with him. (13)

## 8

(1 Cel., I, 21)

One day the Saint came to Alviano [south of Todi] to preach the word of God. He mounted on to a raised piece of ground so that all might see him, and asked for silence. The crowd was silent and stood around reverently. But it so happened that a number of swallows who were building their nests nearby, began to twitter loudly and to make such a noise, that Blessed Francis could not be heard by the people.

Then he addressed the birds as follows: "Swallows, my sisters, it is now time that I should speak, you have said enough! Listen to the word of the Lord, be silent and keep quiet until the sermon is over!" And to the amazement of those who stood around, the swallows fell silent at once and did not move from the spot until the sermon was at an end.

When the people saw this sign, they were filled with great admiration and they hastened with deep reverence to kiss the hem of the Saint's garment, and they praised God, saying: "Truly, this man is a Saint and a friend of the Most High!"

It is indeed wonderful how even the irrational creatures were

aware of his loving kindness and reciprocated his tenderness. One day while the Saint was staying near Greccio [in the valley of Rieti, on the slope of the Sabine Hills] a little hare was caught in a snare and one of the brothers freed it and carried it, still alive, to Francis. When the blessed Servant of God saw it, he was filled with compassion and said: "Little Brother Hare, come here, why did you allow yourself to be thus deceived?"

The brother who had been carrying the hare released it, and it ran straight to the Saint and hid in his lap, as though to show that it felt safe there.

After it had rested there for a while, and the Saint had stroked it with the tenderness of a mother, he let it go, so that it might return to the woods. But although the animal was put down on the ground several times, it always climbed back on to the knees of the Saint, until he bade one of the brothers carry it back to the forest. . . .

Once, when he was sitting in a boat near a port on the lake of Rieti, a fisher just caught a large fish. It was what the people call a tench. The fisher brought it reverently to Francis. The Saint accepted the fish gladly, bestowed on him the fraternal salutation and put him back into the water beside the boat. And as long as he continued to pray, the fish played about in the water beside the boat and did not swim away from the spot where the Saint had put him, until Francis had finished his prayer and dismissed him.

## 9

(I *Cel.*, I, 29)

It would be beyond us, not to say impossible, to collect and relate all the teachings and acts of the reverend father as long as he dwelt in the flesh. And who would be able to describe the measure of the love which he bore to all that is God's? . . .

His tenderness embraced even the worms, for he had read what was said of Our Saviour: "But I am a worm, and no man" (Ps. xxii. 6). Therefore he would pick up the worms from the road and put them in a safe place, so that they should not be trodden underfoot by the passers-by.

And what shall I say of other lowly beasts? He would cause honey and the best wine to be given to the bees in winter-time, so that they should not suffer during the cold season. Their nimble activity and their wondrous science could move him to glorifying the wonders of the Lord so enthusiastically that he often would speak of nothing else for a whole day, praising the bees and the other creatures. . . .

And when he considered the glory of the flowers, how happy he was to gaze at the beauty of their forms and to enjoy their marvellous fragrance! How easily his spirit would take wing and rise to meditating on the beauty of that unique flower that blossomed, as fair as the approaching spring, from "the root of Jesse" and by its fragrance brought new life to countless men who were dead in their souls!

When he found many flowers growing together, it might happen that he would speak to them and encourage them, as though they could understand, to praise the Lord. It was the same with the fields of corn and the vineyards, the stones in the earth and in the woods, all the beauteous meadows, the tinkling brooks, the sprouting gardens, earth, fire, air and wind—all these he exhorted in his pure, childlike spirit to love God and to serve Him joyfully.

He was wont to call all created things his brothers and sisters, and in a wonderful manner inaccessible to others he would enter into the secret of things as one to whom "the glorious liberty of the children of God" [Rom. viii. 21] had been given. . . .

How fair, radiant and glorious was the sinlessness of his life, the simplicity of his words, the purity of his heart, his love of God and his neighbour, his unquestioning obedience and his fidelity to his Master! To this must be added his angelic appearance, the charm of his manner, his natural gentleness, the kindness of his conversation, the delicacy of his admonitions, the loyalty with which he treated anything told him in confidence, the wisdom of his counsel, the energy of his actions and his general loveliness. . . .

He was a man of great eloquence; the expression of his face was gay and kindly, equally free of torpor as of arrogance. He was of middling stature, rather small, his head of moderate size and round, his face rather long and narrow, the forehead smooth and low, the black eyes of middling size, friendly and candid, the hair dark, the

eyebrows straight, the nose regular, straight and small, the ears close to the head and small, the temples smooth; his speech was winsome, but fiery and spiritual, his voice powerful, pleasant, clear and harmonious; his teeth were close together, an even white row behind narrow, gently rounded lips, his beard dark and somewhat thin; the neck slender, resting on straight shoulders, the arms short, the hands delicate with long fingers and nails; his spare, fragile body with its slender legs and small feet was covered by a rough gown. His sleep was brief, his hand ever open to give. He was the humblest among the humble, mild in his manner towards all men and able to adapt himself to the behaviour of everyone. He, the foremost of Saints, appeared among sinners to be one of them.

## 10

(2 *Cel.*, II, 129, 130)

A nobleman from the county of Siena sent a pheasant to Blessed Francis one time that he was sick. He received the bird with alacrity, not because he desired to eat it, but because in his love for the Creator he delighted in such gifts. So he said to the pheasant: "Praised be our Creator, Brother Pheasant!" and to the brothers: "Now we will see whether Brother Pheasant will stay with us, or whether he will prefer to return to his accustomed haunts!" And he ordered a brother to carry the pheasant away and place it in a vineyard at some distance.

But the pheasant returned in rapid flight to the cell of the father. Then he was carried still farther away, but with great perseverance he returned again and again to the door of the hut and, almost forcing his way under the tunics of the brothers who stood on the threshold, he slipped inside.

Then the Saint ordered them to feed the pheasant well, pressing it to his breast and caressing it with loving words.

A physician who was very devoted to the Saint saw this pheasant and asked the brothers to let him have the bird, not for his table, but because he wanted to take care of it out of reverence for the Saint. But when he had carried him home, the pheasant, as though protesting against the injury of his separation from the Saint, refused

all food. Amazed, the physician carried the bird back to St. Francis forthwith and told him what had happened. When the pheasant, having been put to the ground, saw the good father, he was no longer sad and began to take his food right merrily.

Next to the Saint's little cell near Portiuncula a cicada used to sit on a figtree, and chirp in its usual cheery manner. The blessed father would often stretch out his hand and call the insect to him, saying: "Sister Cicada, come to me."

And as though it were endowed with intelligence, the insect would climb on to his hand, and he admonished it: "Sister Cicada, you must sing now and praise the Lord, your Creator!"

And without hesitation the cicada would obey and begin to chirp, never stopping until the Servant of God joined his song to that of the insect and told it to return to its accustomed place.

There it stayed still, as though it had been fastened to the tree, for a whole week. When the Saint passed on his way from his cell, he would take it into his hand and command it to sing. And it always hastened to obey his command.

In the end the Saint said to his companions: "Now it is time that we dismiss our sister, the cicada. It has delighted us long enough with its chirping, and we do not want our flesh to be vainglorious about these things." So the cicada received its leave, flew away and was seen no more. All the brothers who witnessed this happening were exceedingly amazed.

## HIS SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND HIS CHARITY

### II

(2 *Cel.*, II, 5, 16)

At the time when the Saint returned from overseas, accompanied by Brother Leonardo of Assisi, it happened that, tired with the long journey, he mounted a donkey for a short while. His companion, who was following him on foot, was likewise very tired, and in an access of human weakness, he said to himself: "His parents were not my parents' equals—and now it is he who rides, while I can walk and lead his ass!"



He was still thinking these thoughts when the Saint suddenly got down from the donkey and said: "No, Brother, it is not fitting that I should ride while you walk; in the world your position was far superior to mine." The friar was amazed and blushed with shame, knowing the Saint had read his heart. Throwing himself at Blessed Francis's feet, he wept and confessed what he had been thinking, imploring his forgiveness. (14) . . .


Blessed Francis often stayed in his cell all day long without joining the brethren, except to take some nourishment, and this not always at the regular hour, for the stronger desire for spiritual sustenance held him back.

One day two worthy and exemplary friars came to his hermitage in Greccio from a long distance, with no other reason than to see the Saint and receive his blessing. When they arrived, they no longer found the father, as he had already withdrawn from the public room to his cell, and this distressed them deeply. The uncertainty of his return possibly involving a long delay, they took their leave very sorrowfully, ascribing their disappointment to their own unworthiness.

Accompanied by the companions of Blessed Francis, who attempted to comfort them, they had gone a distance of about a stone's throw when the Saint suddenly called after them and said to one of his companions: "Tell my brothers who have come here to see me that they should look at me." And as the said friars turned their eyes to him, the Saint made the sign of the cross over them and blessed them most lovingly. And they rejoiced greatly that their pious wish had been fulfilled in so wonderful a manner, and they returned home praising and thanking God.


Blessed Francis was no scholar, but God had instructed him in the wisdom which is derived from on high, and, enlightened by the rays of eternal splendour, he had an excellent understanding of the Holy Scriptures. His pure spirit penetrated to depths where learned science could but skim the surface.

He read much in the scriptures, and when his mind had once seized something, it would remain for ever engraved in his heart. He had a wonderful memory for the Bible because he did not read it superficially, but meditated on what he had read in his heart. He called this way of reading and learning a fruitful way, not so the searching in a thousand different books.

He maintained that it was true wisdom to set greater store on nothing than the desire for eternal life. He said that a man who sinks his mind humbly into the Holy Scriptures without making much ado about his great learning can easily attain self-knowledge and knowledge of God. 

The Saint always knew the right answers to questions, and though he was unversed in the art of rhetoric, he could speak most lucidly, bringing out the innermost meaning of things.

When he was sick and suffering great pain, one of his companions said to him: "Father, you have always had recourse to the scriptures, and they have always given you a remedy for your pain; let us read aloud to you from the prophets, perhaps you will draw consolation from them."

The Saint said: "It is good to read the testimonies of the scriptures,  and good to seek the Lord in them, but I believe I have enough of the scriptures in my mind to have sufficient matter for meditation. I do not need more, my son, for I know Christ, who was poor and died on the cross."

## 13

(2 Cel., II, 142, 146)

Holy simplicity, which is the daughter of grace, the sister of wisdom and the mother of justice, was diligently fostered by the Saint in himself, and he loved to find it in others. Yet he did not approve of every kind of simplicity, only of that which is content with God alone and sets scant store on all other things; the simplicity which glories in the fear of God and neither can do evil nor speak in malice; the simplicity that, examining itself, condemns no one; the simplicity that honours those in authority and seeks no power for itself; the simplicity that sets no store by humanistic learning

and looks to deeds, rather than to discourses and doctrines; the simplicity that leaves all redundancy in divine matters, all pompous exaggeration, all desire for effect and vain glory to those who must perish, while it seeks the marrow instead of the rind, the kernel instead of the shell, the essence instead of the manifold, the highest abiding good; this was the simplicity that the father desired his brethren to have, both the learned clerks and the laybrothers. As he saw it, this simplicity was not the opposite of wisdom, but wisdom's true sister, although easier to attain for the unlearned, and closer within their reach. That is why he wrote in his praise of the virtues: "Hail, queen wisdom, the Lord save thee, with thy sister, pure simplicity!"

Once he said that a great scholar joining the order must, in a manner of speaking, renounce even his learning, so that, stripped of even this possession, he might offer himself naked to the arms of the Crucified. For learning, he added, made many scholars into bad pupils and gave them a certain rigidity that made it hard for them to take on the discipline of humility. "Therefore," he said, "I would have a learned man come to me with these words: 'See, brother, I have lived for a long time in the world and have not truly known my God; now, I pray you, give me a place, where, remote from the turmoil of the world, I can repent my past life, collect my heart from distraction and set the house of my spirit in order.'

"What think you," continued the Saint, "will be the future of one who begins in this way? Most assuredly he will later be like an unchained lion and the blessed fruit he has once tasted will ripen within him and grow. When such a man is entrusted with the ministry of the word, his lips will overflow with the ardour blazing within him."

He was often uplifted by such sweetness of contemplation that he was rapt in ecstasy, yet he told no man of the things beyond the range of normal human experience which were revealed to him. We know of one incident which may serve as an example of the manner in which he was enraptured. One day [returning from Mount

Alverna to Assisi] he was journeying along the road, riding an ass; his intention was to pass through Borgo San Sepolcro and rest at the lazar-house. It was soon noised abroad that the Saint was passing this way, and men and women flocked together from all sides, in order to see him and to touch him in their devotion. But strange to relate, though they laid hands on him, pulled his habit and even cut pieces out of it so as to keep them as relics, the Servant of God seemed as impervious to all this as a dead body, entirely unaware of all that was going on around him. At last the Saint and his companions continued on their way; they had left the Borgo far behind them when the contemplator of celestial things, like one who returns from a great distance, suddenly asked solicitously when they would arrive at the Borgo.

## 15

(2 *Cel.*, II, 37)

One day, when the Saint's vicar, Brother Pietro di Cattaneo, saw the great number of friars who had congregated from all places to visit Santa Maria di Portiuncula, and realized that the alms he had received would not suffice to provide for them, he said to the Saint: "Dear Brother, what shall I do? Allow us, I pray you, to put by part of the property of the novices that join the order, so that we may have something at hand in urgent cases!" The Saint answered: "Far be from us, dearest brother, a piety that would cause us to act impiously towards the Rule for the sake of men!"

"But what am I to do?" asked Brother Pietro.

"Strip the altar of the Blessed Virgin," said the Saint, "remove the vain ornaments, if you cannot succour the needy in any other way. Believe me, the Holy Mother would far rather have us observe the teachings of her Son and strip her altar than adorn her altar and neglect the Gospels. The Lord will surely send someone who will restore these ornaments, which He has lent to us." (15)

## 16

(2 *Cel.*, II, 78)

The Saint wished the sweet poison which arises from familiar association with women, and may be harmful even to holy men, to be avoided. He feared that it might destroy the weak and weaken the spirit of the strong. He was wont to say that unless a man be exceptionally proven it was as easy for him to avoid contagion and yet associate with women as it is to walk through fire without scorching one's feet.

So that he might teach through action, he himself gave the example of all virtue. . . . When the importunate loquacity of women became troublesome to him, he would soon break off the conversation and, bowing his head in humility, recommend silence. Sometimes he would raise his downcast eyes to heaven, seemingly drawing from there the answer he made to this vain babbling.

Once he said to his companions: "I can aver truthfully, dearest brothers, that if I looked at her face, I would recognize no woman except two [Sister Clare and the Lady Giacoma di Settesoli].<sup>1</sup> I know the features of these two, but of no other. . . ."

## 17

(2 *Cel.*, II, 82)

At the hermitage of the brethren at Sartiano [near Chiusi in Tuscany] the Evil One, who is ever envious of the progress of the children of God, assailed the Saint most violently. Seeing him increase in saintliness, never content with one day's progress and setting himself a higher aim for the next, he called to him three times one night while he was praying in his cell, saying: "Francis, Francis, Francis!" The Saint answered: "What do you want?" The Evil One said: "There is no sinner in the world whom God does not

<sup>1</sup> We will have occasion to return to Lady Giacoma as well as to Clare further on. The former belonged to the Roman nobility. Francis met her in 1212 during one of his sojourns in Rome. At that time she was about twenty-five years old. She had two sons. Her husband, Gratiano di Frangipani, died in 1217. Francis called her "Brother Giacoma" because of the manly strength of her character, and she became an influential patron of the Saint and his brethren. (16)

pardon if he be converted. But the man who wreaks his own undoing through cruel penance will find no mercy in all eternity!"

At once the intention of the enemy was revealed to the Saint, and how by these means he desired to lure him back to tepidity. . . . However, when the demon understood that he could not catch the Saint in this trap, he did not desist and tried to vanquish the Saint by another assault, namely the incitement of the flesh. . . . As soon as he understood this, the blessed Father threw off his tunic and began to scourge himself mercilessly with a knotted cord, saying: "See there, Brother Ass! This is how I would have you! You must feel the whip! Do you still want to run away?"

When he saw that, despite the discipline, the temptation did not lessen, although his skin was bruised by the blows he dealt himself, he opened the door of his cell, went out into the garden and threw himself naked into the deep snow. Then he took handfuls of snow and formed seven large snowballs, shaping them like pillars, which he set upright, saying to his body: "Look there, this large one is your wife, the next four are your sons and daughters, and the last two your man-servant and your maid-servant, whom you need to wait on you. Now hurry, clothe them quickly, they will die of cold! But if you find it burdensome to have so many responsibilities, then serve God alone!"

Thereupon the devil departed in confusion and the Saint returned to his cell and praised God.

A devout brother, who happened to be praying at the time, saw all this in the clear moonlight. When the Saint learnt after some time that someone had watched him that night, he was very mortified and commanded the friar to tell no man of it during his lifetime.

We must not remain silent about the spiritual edifice, far more glorious than the terrestrial one, which the blessed father established after he had carried out the material repairs of the church [of San Damiano] for the increase of the City of God. . . . The virgins dedicated to Christ had begun to come together in that place [San

Damiano, in 1212] and they also congregated from all parts of the world, dedicating themselves to perfection by the observance of absolute poverty and every virtue.

Although the blessed father gradually withdrew his corporal presence from them, his affection for these his daughters in the Holy Spirit and his care for them increased. For when the Saint recognized by many proofs of high perfection how ready they were to endure all manner of losses and to perform toilsome labour for Christ's sake, resolved never to fail in following the holy commandments, he promised them and all who should vow a similar observance of poverty his help and counsel for all time, and likewise the help and counsel of his brethren.<sup>1</sup>

He kept his promise most faithfully all his life, and when he was on the point of death he did not forget to enjoin it upon his brothers, affirming that the self-same spirit had led the brethren and those Poor Ladies away from the world.

Once, when the friars expressed their surprise that he did not cherish the handmaidens of Christ more, he said: "Do not think, dear brothers, that I have not perfect love for them. If it were a great thing to cherish them in Christ, is it not an even greater one to have joined them to Christ? If I had not called them, it would have done no one any harm, but not to care for those who have been called would be indeed inhuman. But I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done. I do not wish any one among you to offer to visit them of his own free will, rather that those should be chosen who are unwilling and most reluctant, only spiritual men, proven by a long life of devotion." . . . Once, when the blessed father was staying at San Damiano, his vicar pressed him hard that he should preach the word of God to his daughters, and

<sup>1</sup> St. Clare herself confirms this in the Rule of 1253, Chapter 6: "When the Almighty Heavenly Father in His mercy deigned to enlighten my heart so that I began a new life after the example and according to the advice of our blessed father, St. Francis, I promised soon after my conversion and of my own free will, as also did my sisters, to be obedient to him. And when the blessed father saw that we had no fear whatever of poverty, hardships, sadness, humiliation and scorn on the part of the world, nay, that all this seemed to us surpassingly sweet, in his loving kindness he wrote out a way of life for us as follows: 'As you, inspired by God, have made yourselves daughters and handmaids of the highest King and have vowed to the Holy Spirit to live according to the way of perfection shown in the Holy Gospels, I vow and promise for my own person, and also in the name of my brethren, always to care for you as I do for them, with all solicitude and attention.'

"This he observed most faithfully as long as he lived, and he desired that his brethren should always continue to do likewise." (17)

he would not desist until the Saint consented, giving way to his repeated entreaties. When the ladies congregated as usual to hear the word of God, and not less to look upon their father, he lifted his eyes to Heaven, where his heart always was, and began to call upon Christ. Then he sent for ashes and scattered them in a circle on the pavement, and what remained he poured upon his head. Seeing the blessed father remaining silently within the circle of ashes, the ladies marvelled exceedingly. Suddenly the Saint arose, and after having admonished them, he recited the psalm 'Miserere mei, Deus' in lieu of a sermon and as soon as he had finished it, he hastened out of the door.

This symbolic homily filled the handmaidens of Christ with such deep contrition that they wept torrents of tears and could hardly keep back from punishing themselves with their own hands. . . .

## 19

(2 *Cel.*, II, 88, 89)

The Saint maintained that the safest remedy against the thousand snares and pitfalls of the Evil One was a joyous spirit. He was wont to say: "The devil exults most of all when he can deprive a servant of God of the gladness of his spirit. He carries a fine dust with him, which he strews through all the chinks of our conscience, so as to besmirch the candour of the spirit and the purity of the soul. Yet against the joy which fills the heart of a spiritual man, the serpent spews out his fatal venom in vain. The demons cannot harm a servant of Christ when they see him filled with holy joyousness, but if a man be tearful, embittered, desolate and sad, it may happen that he will either remain absorbed in grief or turn to vain distractions."

For this reason the Saint strove to live always in jubilation of heart, and to keep his spirit bright with the oil of joy. Above all he avoided the deadly sickness of despondency ("*accidia*") and as soon as a trace of it entered his heart, he would take refuge in prayer. He used to say: "Should, as may happen, a servant of God be somewhat troubled in his spirit for one reason or another, he must arise and pray. And he should persist in the presence of his heavenly Father



until He has given him back his salutary joy. For if he allows himself to remain in sadness, that Babylonian abomination will increase and, unless it be purged out by tears, it will corrode his heart with rust. . . .”

At the time when he was staying in Rieti for the cure of his eyes, [autumn 1225] he summoned one of his companions, who in the world had been a luteplayer, and said to him: “Brother, the children of the world do not understand God’s mysteries; the musical instruments, designed to glorify the Lord, have been degraded by man’s lustfulness to the purpose of flattering his own ears. I would like you, brother, to borrow a lute secretly and to bring it here and sing an honest song, so as to give some solace to my Brother Body, who is full of pain.” Thereupon the friar replied: “I would be very ashamed, Father, for I fear the people would think I had been tempted by levity.” “Then let it be, brother,” said the Saint. “One does well to give up many things so as to avoid giving offence.”

The following night, as the holy man was watching and meditating on divine matters, he suddenly heard the sound of a lute with admirable harmonies and the sweetest melody. He could see no one, but the sound came once from this side, once from that, as though the lutanist were walking to and fro. Finally, turning his spirit to God, the holy father was so overwhelmed by the loveliness of those sweet sounds that he felt himself transported into another world.

On arising next morning, the Saint called the aforesaid brother, narrated what had happened and added: “The Lord who consoles the afflicted has never yet let me remain without comfort. As I was not allowed to listen to the lutes of men, I was made to hear a lute far sweeter than theirs.”

✓ The object of his striving, his foremost wish and ultimate desire, was to observe the teachings of the holy Gospels in everything with utmost faithfulness, and to obey the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ with all the ardour of his soul. Above all it was the humility manifested by the Incarnation and the charity of Christ’s Passion

that occupied his mind to such an extent that he could hardly meditate on anything else. In this connection we must relate with great reverence what he did at Greccio on the Feast of the Nativity, three years before his death.

In that neighbourhood there lived a man named Giovanni [Vellita], the excellence of whose life even surpassed that of his name and standing. The Saint held him in great esteem because this man, notwithstanding the high position he had occupied, set but scant store on worldly honours and strove to attain true nobility of soul.

Blessed Francis sent for him [on his return from Rome after the confirmation of the Rule] as he had often done before; it was just a fortnight before the Nativity of Our Lord. He said to him: "If you desire us to celebrate the Holy Nativity at Greccio, then hurry and prepare for it as I tell you. I would like to represent the birth of the Child just as it took place at Bethlehem, so that men should see with their own eyes the hardships He suffered as an infant, how He was laid on hay in a manger with the ox and the ass standing by."

When the good man heard these words, he immediately set to work with great zeal and prepared everything in the said place as the Saint had told him to do. Thus the blessed day of rejoicing approached. The friars were summoned from many places, and men and women of the town happily prepared candles and torches, to illuminate as well as they could the night on which the Star had risen which pierces all time with the rays of its light.

When Francis came to the place, he found everything prepared and was well pleased. The manger was ready, the hay was brought, an ox and an ass were led in. Thus was holy simplicity honoured, holy poverty exalted, and gentle humility touched all hearts. Verily, in that hour Greccio became a new Bethlehem. The night was as light as day, men and beasts were filled with joy. Crowds came flocking to Greccio and rejoiced anew at the renewal of the mystery. The forest was filled with song, the rocks re-echoed the sounds of jubilation. The brethren sang canticles of praise to the Lord and the night overflowed with gladness.

The Saint stood before the manger, heaving deep sighs, his heart full of heavenly bliss. Mass was said over the manger, and the priest who celebrated it enjoyed a new consolation. The Saint, who was a deacon, donned a surplice and intoned the gospel, singing in a loud

voice, strong, clear and melodious, inviting all those present to take part in the everlasting song of praise. Then he preached to the assembled people, and told them in mellifluous words of the birth of the poor King in the little town of Bethlehem. . . .

A man was vouchsafed a wondrous vision that night: he saw a child lying in the manger as though it were dead, but when St. Francis came near it seemed to awaken to life. This vision was not meaningless, for had not the Child Jesus died the spiritual death of oblivion in many hearts, to be awakened to new life, and to reign for ever in those hearts by God's grace and the ministrations of St. Francis?

When the nocturnal vigil was ended, they all returned home right joyfully. . . .

## 21

(I *Cel.*, II, 3)

When St. Francis was staying in the hermitage called Monte Alverna—two years before he gave back his soul to Heaven—he was vouchsafed a vision [in September 1224]. He saw a man floating in the air above him, who, like a seraph, had six wings and was nailed to a cross with outstretched hands and joined feet. Two wings rose above his head, two were outspread as for flight, and two covered the entire body.

When the blessed Servant of God saw this, he was seized by deep wonder, but he was unable to comprehend the meaning of what he had seen. Although he experienced exceedingly great happiness and bliss through the merciful and loving glance with which the ineffably beautiful seraph looked at him, the fact that he was nailed to the cross and was in bitter pain went to his heart.

When he rose at last, he was, in a manner of speaking, happy and sad at the same time, joy and sorrow moving his spirit in turn. He reflected diligently on the meaning of the apparition, and his mind was not a little perturbed by his efforts to seize its sense. Yet he remained unable to attain a clear discernment, and he was inwardly disturbed by the strangeness of the vision.

Suddenly the traces of wounds began to appear on his hands and feet, just as he had seen them a short time ago on the hands and feet


of the crucified man. His hands and feet seemed to be pierced in the middle by nails, in such a way that the traces of the nail-heads appeared on the palms and on the upper part of the feet, and the points of the nails on the opposite side; for the marks were round on the inside of the hands, and elongated on the outside; a raised spot like a wart became apparent, resembling the turned-back ends of nails. In like manner the marks of nails were imprinted on his feet and were raised above the surrounding flesh. His right side seemed to be pierced by a lance and bore a wound from which blood would often flow, so much that his tunic and his drawers were frequently stained with blood.


Alas, that it should have been permitted to so few to see the sacred wound in the side of the crucified Lord's crucified servant during his lifetime! . . . Once Brother Ruffino was rubbing the blessed father's chest, and, as it may easily happen, his hand slipped and touched the blessed wound on St. Francis's right side. The Saint was very distressed and pushed the brother's hand away, crying to the Lord to forgive Brother Ruffino. For he took great care to conceal the stigmata and hid them as well as he could even from those nearest and dearest to him, so that his most devoted and intimate companions knew nothing about them for a long time.

## 22

(2 *Cel.*, II, 162)

"In man's end," says the wise man, "his works are laid bare" and this was most gloriously demonstrated by this saint, who hastened joyfully along the path of God's commandments and reached the summit of sanctity by the successive steps of all the virtues. . . .

 In the end . . . his miraculous works were more resplendent than ever and it was as clear as the day at noontide that all he had done in his life was from God, for by treading all delights of mortal life underfoot he had made himself free to enter into the joys of Heaven. Having ever held it a loss to live for the world, he loved his own unto the end and singing, he went towards death.

 For when he was already quite worn out by the grievous sickness and nearing the end of all ailments [1 October 1226, in the evening] he showed by his acts that he cared for nothing now, but to leave

the world. Reduced to extremity by his illness, he caused himself to be laid naked on the bare ground, so that if the fiend should make a final assault on him in his last hour, he might fight naked against his naked foe. He looked forward intrepidly to his final triumph, and prepared with folded hands to receive the crown of righteousness. As he lay thus on the ground, stripped of his wretched garment, he lifted his countenance to heaven as was his wont and, absorbed in the celestial glory, he covered the wound in his side with his left hand, so that none should see it, and said to the brethren: "I have done my part, may Christ now show you yours."

At this, the brothers shed floods of tears and heaved deep sighs, almost unable to bear the compassion they felt for him. When the sobbing had died down a little, the guardian was divinely inspired to understand the truth; he arose and brought the tunic, the drawers and the little cap of sackcloth the Saint wore, and said to the father: "Know that this tunic, these drawers and this cap of sackcloth have been lent to you by me for the sake of holy obedience, and so that you should know that you have no proprietary claim on them, I deprive you of the power to give them to anyone else."

The Saint rejoiced greatly and his heart was gladdened when he saw that he had been faithful to the Lady Poverty unto the end. His zeal for poverty had been so great that he had not wished to possess even a habit of his own to the end, but only to have it as a loan from another. The little cap he wore on his head to cover the scars he had received through the operation to his eyes was of coarse sacking, although he would truly have needed the comfort of a soft felt cap of precious wool.

Thereupon the Saint lifted his hands to heaven and praised the Lord Jesus Christ, because, being now liberated from all things, he was free to go to Him. So as to prove himself to be in all things a true imitator of Christ his God, he cherished his brethren and sons, whom he had cherished from the beginning, unto the end. He caused all the friars who were present to be called to him, soothing the grief they felt at his dying with words of consolation, and with fatherly affection exhorting them to love God. He admonished them to practise patience and holy poverty and to set the rules of the Holy Gospel before all else. Now that all the brethren were sitting around him, he stretched out his right hand and, beginning with his vicar,

he laid it on the head of each one in turn, and in blessing those who were present he blessed also all the brethren everywhere in the world, and those that should come after them until the end of time.

## ST. FRANCIS AND ST. CLARE

(From *Legenda S. Clarae Virginis* by Thomas of Celano) (18)

1. The admirable Lady, Clare [lit. shining] by name and equally shining with virtue, was born of a noble family of Assisi.<sup>1</sup> She was a townswoman of Blessed Francis on earth, and she shared his glory in Heaven. Her father, a knight, followed the profession of his forebears, for his whole family from his father's and his mother's side had been military men. His house was rich and his means abundant according to the standards of his country. Ortolana [lit. the gardener] was the name of the mother who bore the little plant that was to be so fertile in the fruit-garden of the Church, and she herself was by no means barren of the fruit of good works. . . .

3. . . . From her infancy onward Clare grew in compassion, and her pitiful soul commiserated with the miseries of the miserable ("*miserorum miserias miserantem*").

4. She inclined to holy meditations and, carried away by their sweetness, she considered choosing the celibate life. . . . Therefore, when her family wished to marry her to a nobleman, she would not consent. . . .

5. Hearing the name of Francis extolled as that of a renovator who was re-making the path of perfection, which the world had forgotten, by new virtues, she longed to see and hear him, induced thereto by that same Holy Spirit who, though in different ways, had inspired them both from the beginning. Francis, too, had

<sup>1</sup> The alleged family name Sciffi does not appear in the documents in the city archives. Clare's grandfather was called Scipio, and as his sons Monaldo and Favarone were known as "di Scipio" (the sons of Scipio) a scribe's error may have turned this into "di Sciffi". It is certain that the eldest of Scipio's sons, Monaldo, was among the nobles of Assisi who fled to Perugia between 1200 and 1210, so it is possible that Favarone was also exiled and that his daughter Clare grew up in Perugia. About 1205 the property of the exiles (Ghislerio di Sassorosso and Clare's uncle Monaldo) had to be restored to them as one of Perugia's conditions. From then on the family resided at their house on the cathedral square. It is probable that Clare's cousin Ruffino, who joined St. Francis at the same time as Brother Leo did, first spoke to him about her.

already heard the praises of the gracious maiden and he wanted to see her and talk to her; for he, whose whole heart was set on the hunting of souls so that he threatened to depopulate the earth, hoped to snatch this noble prey from the world and vindicate his Lord.

He visited her and, more often still, she visited him; they arranged the times of their meetings so that their devotion to divine things might remain unperceived by all men and undistorted by popular rumour. The maiden took with her only one familiar companion [Bona da Guelfuccio] when she left her parents' house to pay her clandestine visits to the man of God, whose flaming words and deeds appeared to her as something super-human. Father Francis exhorted her to leave the world; he showed her eloquently how arid are the hopes of the world and how deceptive its nature, he filled her ears with praise of the sweetness of the spiritual nuptials and counselled her to reserve the pearl of her virginity for the blessed heavenly bridegroom.

6. Why waste more words? The holy father insisted, faithfully urging his Master's suit, and the virgin did not tarry long until she consented. . . . She then committed herself entirely to Francis's spiritual care, instituting him after God as the director of her soul. She placed entire faith in his godly counsel, and kept all the words he had uttered of the supreme good of Jesus in her heart. She was already displeased with the ornaments of her worldly estate and she "counted all things but dung" that were applauded in the marketplace, provided she might "win Christ" [Phil. iii. 8].

7. The solemn feast of Palm Sunday [18 March 1212] was approaching when, with a glowing heart, the maiden confided her life to the care of the man of God, asking him how and where she was to put her conversion into practice. Father Francis bade her go with the crowd, wearing her festive raiment, to fetch the blessed palms, and on the following night to leave the world and exchange its joys for mourning the Passion of our Lord. When Palm Sunday came, the maiden, outshining all the ladies there by the splendour of her festive adornment, went into the church with the others. Then a true omen took place: as the others were crowding forwards to receive the blessed palms, Clare in her modesty, remained motionless in her place; but the Bishop descended the steps and came

straight towards her and laid the palm into her hands.<sup>1</sup> That night she prepared herself to join the Saint, and arranged that she should be decently accompanied on her flight. As she did not want to leave the house by the usual door, she chose another which was barricaded with stones and wood, but, marvelling at her own strength, she succeeded in pushing it open with her own hands.

8. Having thus forsaken her ancestral home, her native town and her kinsfolk, she hastened to S. Mary of Portiuncula, where the brethren were keeping a sacred vigil before the altar of God and came out to meet her with lighted torches in their hands.<sup>2</sup> There and then she rejected the dross of Babylon and wrote the world a bill of divorcement. She deposited her tresses into the hands of the brethren and laid away her various ornaments. Truly, what place could have been more fitting for the blossoming forth, in the evening of time, of the Order of virgins, than the sanctuary of that foremost and highest of virgins, she who alone was a Virgin Mother? From this place had also gone forth the new militia of the poor, under the leadership of Francis, as though it were to be clearly shown that the Mother of Mercy had reared both these orders in the same cradle.

After having received the insignia of holy penitence before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, Christ's humble handmaiden was betrothed to Him before the nuptial couch of Mary. And immediately St. Francis led her to the church of San Paolo [a convent of Benedictine nuns near Assisi] where he bade her remain until God had provided otherwise.

Celano then describes how St. Clare's kinsmen attempted to bring her away by force, but she clung to the altar—thus claiming sanctuary—and showed them her shorn head to prove how serious her decision was. She was soon followed by her sister Agnes, who passed through similar trials. After staying for a while in the little convent of St. Angelo di Panso on Monte Subiaso, the sisters moved to San Damiano, which was the property of the Bishop. The founders had in mind that, just as the friars devoted themselves to

<sup>1</sup> The Bishop, who counselled Francis in all things, had doubtless been informed of Clare's intentions by him.

<sup>2</sup> Beside St. Francis, Clare's cousin Brother Ruffino and Brother Silvester the priest were there; all three brethren were from Assisi.



preaching the gospel as well as to prayer and meditation, the sisterhood should divide their time between the contemplative life and works of charity, especially the nursing of the sick. This proves that they did not originally intend the order to be enclosed. But Cardinal Hugolino, the later Pope Gregory IX, insisted that the Poor Clares should change their original practices and conform to the severely contemplative rule of the older orders.(19) As regards the rule of poverty, St. Clare was even firmer than St. Francis, and she did not allow herself to be deflected from it even by the Pope himself.

14. When the Pope advised her, with a view to existing conditions and to earthly perils, to accept certain properties which he himself generously offered her, she refused bravely and would not consent. The Pope said: "If you have doubts because of your vows, we will release you from them." "Holy Father," she replied, "in no wise do I wish, and I say this once and for all time, to be dispensed from the imitation of Christ. . . ."

Finally Gregory confirmed the unusual privilege of poverty, which had probably already been given in 1216 by Innocent III. Shortly before her death, St. Clare succeeded, after long struggles, in obtaining the confirmation of Innocent IV for San Damiano (1253).(20)

. . . [San Damiano] was the same church for the repair of which Francis had shown such zeal, and had given the necessary money to the priest. It was the same in which Francis heard a voice speak to him from the cross while he was in prayer, saying: "Francis, go and repair my house, which is, as you see, all in ruins." Here, in a narrow cell, Clare immured herself as a virgin for the love of her heavenly bridegroom . . . and here the order of the Poor Ladies had its beginning.

#### POPULAR LEGENDS

A. Fortini, in his *Vita Nuova di San Francesco d'Assisi* (Milano 1926), relates two legends that have survived among the people, which prove that, though the relations between the two Saints may

have been misunderstood and traduced during their lifetime, posterity, while remembering their trials, justified their memory.

According to one legend, Francis and Clare were journeying together from Spello to Assisi and went into a house to ask for a little bread and water on their way. They noticed the people looking askance at them and heard them making covert allusions to their mutual relationship. They continued their way through the snow-covered countryside, for it was winter. Twilight fell. St. Francis suddenly said: "Sister, did you understand what these people were saying?" Saint Clare did not answer, for her distress was such that she dared not speak. "It is time we should part," continued the father. "You will reach the convent before nightfall and I will go on alone, following where God leads me." St. Clare knelt down in the middle of the road, prayed a while and then walked on with bowed head without looking round. But after some time she found herself in a wood and had not the heart to continue on her way without a word of consolation or leave-taking, so she waited for St. Francis and when he came up to her she said: "Father, when shall we meet again?" The blessed father replied: "When summer returns and the roses blossom again." Then a miracle took place, and all the juniper-bushes around and the frosty hedges were covered with roses. When St. Clare had recovered from her amazement, she went and picked a bunch of roses and gave them to St. Francis. And, so says the legend, the Saints parted no more. . . . According to another legend, Brother Francis and Brother Leo had gone to Siena together, and the Saint was sad because the people there had received them with scant courtesy. His thoughts went back to his dear Assisi where he had left his spiritual sons and his beloved daughter in God. He knew that the pious virgin had much to contend with because of her devotion to holy poverty, and he feared that his dear Clare might sicken in body and spirit; also he was apprehensive lest, now that she was alone in San Damiano, she might allow herself to be deflected from her holy resolutions.<sup>1</sup> These doubts weighed so heavily on him that he felt he could walk no further when he reached the place where the road turns into the hilly country. He dragged himself to a well and stood looking down at the clear water for a long time. Then he suddenly raised his head and said joyfully to Brother Leo:

<sup>1</sup> By Cardinal Ugolino, who actually imposed his rule on the Poor Clares in 1218, in place of the original rule set down by St. Francis. But, as shown above, St. Clare preserved the ideal of strict poverty, which seemed essential to her.

"Brother Leo, little lamb of God, what do you think I have seen in the water of the well?"

"The moon which is reflected therein, father," replied Brother Leo.

"No, Brother Leo, I did not see Sister Moon, but through the infinite mercy of our Lord I have seen the true face of our Sister Clare, and her countenance was so pure and full of holy joy that my fears have vanished. I know now that in this hour our sister partakes of the perfect joy which God gives to His dear ones by pouring out on them the treasures of holy poverty."

# *The Writings of Brother Leo and His Companions*

1246 AND 1266 TO 1271

## INTRODUCTORY

THE MATERIAL we have here (1) was set down by the earliest and purest representatives of the Franciscan ideal, foremost by Brother Leo, the Saint's familiar friend, and it has been saved for posterity after undergoing manifold reverses.

No portrait of the Little Poor Man equals these glimpses Leo of Assisi affords us of him, living and suffering in the midst of his brethren, for Brother Leo wrote with entire sincerity, without a thought of policy or of presenting an uplifting picture—and for that very reason what he wrote is truly uplifting, although one is surprised at his total lack of worldly wisdom. Brother Leo in his “pure simplicity” (as he appears in the testimony of the brethren) emerges as the true counterpart of the Saint himself; he was the “beloved disciple” to whom Francis gave the loving epithet “the little lamb of God”.

Some data on Brother Leo are to be found in ancient chronicles (2) and in P. Sabatier's edition of the *Speculum Perfectionis*. Here we will only recall that he joined Francis in 1210 and was his constant companion and secretary during the last years of his life; later he remained in Assisi, carrying out the Saint's wishes by caring for Mother Clare and her sisterhood and playing the part of spiritual guide to the new generation of the brethren, as St. John the Apostle did in his old age at Ephesus. Brother Leo died at Assisi in 1271.

Sabatier is mistaken in stating that Brother Leo and his companions, Brothers Ruffino and Angelo, first set down their reminiscences in 1227. It has been discovered that this date crept into the *Speculum Perfectionis* through the error of a later copyist, who set down MCCXXXVIII instead of MCCCXVIII. (The 1228 of the Florentine calendar equals our 1227.) But Brother Leo provided the greatest part of the writings of the Three Companions, who sent their *scripta* to the General of the Order in 1246. As already set

forth in Part II of this book, these writings were abundantly drawn upon by Thomas of Celano in his *Second Life of St. Francis*, though he did not transcribe them in their entirety.

The question remains: what became of the actual writings of the Three Companions? They seemed irretrievably lost, through a series of circumstances which will be described later, until the middle of the last century, when a manuscript was discovered which contains the so-called *Legend of the Three Companions*, with intimate details of St. Francis's life among his brethren, as a consecutive whole—just as the manuscript delivered by the Three Companions in 1246 must have done.<sup>(3)</sup>

Nevertheless it is certain that this manuscript, finally edited by M. da Civezza in 1899, does not represent the complete collection of material furnished by the Companions in 1246 to enable Celano to write his biography, but it had been established that the reminiscences of the Saint's companions contained more material than was to be found in the traditional *Legend of the Three Companions*. This explains the puzzling fact that Luke Wadding, the famous chronicler of the Order, referred, in his annals of 1218 to 1220, to passages in the *Legend of the Three Companions* which could not be found in the short traditional work of that name, although their contents are absolutely consistent with the prefatory letter of the Three Companions. Certain phrases, like "We, who have been with him, vouch for this" go to show that they were the authors of the texts.

In the meantime a number of other texts have come to light, some of which, as it has been proved, were included in the collection of 1246, while others were set down later, but also by Brother Leo.

It is due to a remarkable coincidence—as these happenings are called in the world—that any of the reminiscences of Brother Leo and his companions have come down to us. In 1260 the General Chapter of Narbonne (according to others that of Pisa in 1263) ordered the presiding General of the Order Giovanni da Fidanza, known to history as the great Saint and theologian Bonaventure, to prepare a new standard biography of the holy founder of the Order so as "to do away with the numerous separate legends formed from the fragments of the traditions around St. Francis".<sup>(4)</sup> When St. Bonaventure had carried out this command to the satisfaction of the Order, the General Chapter of Pisa 1263 (or that of Paris 1266)<sup>(5)</sup> declared that this biography was to be regarded as authoritative, and all others were forbidden.

The text of this decree, which has frequently been quoted, is as

follows: "Likewise the General Chapter orders by holy obedience that all legends previously written about Blessed Francis should be destroyed, and where any of them can be found outside the Order, the brethren should endeavour to destroy them also. For the legend set down by the General [Bonaventure] has been collated from the testimonies of those who were Blessed Francis's constant companions, and their proven statements are used here with the greatest care." (6)

"This decree," says Jörgensen, "destroyed with one blow all the previous legends, especially the two in which the ideal so dangerous to peace (that of unmitigated poverty) found its most clear expression." The two legends referred to are the *Second Life* by Celano and the original book of the *Three Companions*. Thus it could happen that only two manuscript copies of Celano's one-time official biography came down to posterity, while the reminiscences of the *Three Companions* were scattered to the winds in dutiful zeal and were apparently—though only apparently—lost for all time.

Laudable as the intention may have been to bring about peace in the Order and reconcile the apologists of poverty and those of learning, or, as the "Spirituals" called it, to conceal the contrast between the Saint's ideals and the actual state of affairs, (7) and splendidly as Bonaventure accomplished the task of assimilating the life of St. Francis to the desired standard, the decision remains infinitely regrettable. It was an attempt against truth, and truth always prevails in the end, however subtle the means by which human prudence strives to conceal it. (8) As Jörgensen says, one could not forbid people to know the truth; the split that took place in the Order at the end of the thirteenth century was occasioned, according to contemporary judgments, by these ill-advised measures of "human prudence". (9) It must be admitted that modern historians, also within the Order, have discussed these questions very frankly. (10)

Brother Leo was far too attached to the memory of St. Francis and to his chief ideal to conform himself to a policy which threatened to overshadow the spirit of the revered father. True, he had given Bonaventure, who corresponded with him and visited him in Assisi, the information he needed for his work, but when the latter was finished, he saw only too clearly at what price the "peace" of the Order had been bought. During the subsequent years (1266 until his death in 1271) Brother Leo devoted himself to compiling a *new collection* of reminiscences of St. Francis. He was now the only survivor of the *Three Companions*. He wrote on separate sheets,

the famous *rotuli sancti fratris Leonis* (II) and deposited them with the Poor Clares, who had moved in 1260 from San Damiano to Santa Chiara in the centre of Assisi. He knew that his work would be safe here, and, when the time had come, it was from here that it was given to the world.

The inception of the new work by Brother Leo alone, as the spiritual executor of his friends, is thus described by Jörgensen (page 84):

"The man who had become the living incarnation of the *Legend of the Three Companions*, namely Brother Leo, was still alive in 1271. Despite all prohibitions, the memories of his beloved master's life were still fresh and green in the old man's heart, and when young friars came to visit him in his cell at Portiuncula, his lips overflowed with the thoughts of his heart and he related to them *multa magnalia*,—many great things about St. Francis. Sometimes he would criticize the official legend [Bonaventure] and say that some events had taken place quite differently from the way they were set down there. The young men retained in their memory the stories he told them and his criticisms, and set them down. Thus Brother Leo came into contact with the best minds among the younger members of the Order, Conrad of Offida, Salimbene, Peter Theokesbury [Tewksbury?], the Provincial of England, Francesco da Fabriano, and Angelo Clareno." (Here we might also mention Peter John Olivi, the leader of the "Spirituals", who was the first to quote from Brother Leo's papers.) "When the younger friars had left and Brother Leo found himself alone once again in his wretched little cell . . . he would sit down at his desk and begin to write, just as he had done in the days when St. Francis dictated to him. The memories crowded into his brain, and one sheet of parchment after the other was covered with his beautiful clear script; when the sun sank behind the distant towers of Perugia, Brother Leo rolled up his parchments and took the path that leads along the walls of Assisi under the olives until he reached the convent of St. Clare, where he deposited them. In this manner he gradually noted down many reminiscences; some of them were probably identical with those he had set down together with [Ruffino, Angelo and] Thomas of Celano, but it is probable that many a new page may have been added to this record of his memories . . . in which he laid down the Franciscan ideals for his pupils."

What has been preserved of Brother Leo's loose pages is actually more than what has been saved of the *Legend of the Three Companions*

of 1246. Obviously the secretary of St. Francis had preserved the notes of his friends in his cell, and then added to them new reminiscences on separate sheets, called *rotuli*, which he would quote in conversation or lend to those who were interested in them. It is certain that a number of "Spirituals" had seen copies of these writings by the end of the century, as Olivi, Fabriano, Clarenò and Hubertino di Casale have quoted from them. During the last decades Franciscan scholars have re-discovered several manuscripts which all go back to the notes of Brother Leo and his companions. In a word, after the apparent annihilation of the first witnesses, whose sole purpose had been to show the real intentions of the Saint by examples of his life and teaching and preserve them for posterity, the dead arose again and their works lived.

The strong personality of St. Bonaventure gave the Order a united aim during the period of his generalship (1257 to 1274). Spiritual ministry, science and art flowered. Even the moot question of poverty seemed to be solved by the constitution known as "*Exiit*" of 14 August 1279, which had been prepared by St. Bonaventure personally. But the split had only been bridged over temporarily by reprehensible methods—political distortion of facts and misrepresentation of the documented fundamental ideals. The knowledge of the truth, which was laid down in Brother Leo's papers, acted like a ferment in the circles of the "Spirituals". Some of them kept as quiet as possible—it is their spirit we find in the *Fioretti*. Others, however, like Olivi, allowed themselves to be driven to the brink of heresy, others again, like the so-called "Fratricelli" after John XXII, started reforming movements within the Church and the quarrel assumed dimensions that could no longer be overlooked. What had been a family-dispute between the brethren now became a secular battle that raged right through the Church. The moderate party won the victory over the "Spirituals" owing to the moral support of the Popes, but their victory was fatal to them, as a recent historian of the Order has said. (12) Discipline was undermined, the schism of Avignon made it impossible for the *curia* to exercise its authority, and even saintly men like John of Capistrano saw no other expedient than to advise a complete separation of the two contending factions in the Order, which was then actually decreed by Leo X in 1517.

To return to our point of issue—the most complete among the various compilations issued from the notes of the companions and the reminiscences of Brother Leo is known as *Speculum perfectionis*,



the Mirror of Perfection. The title was doubtless inspired by a phrase in Thomas of Celano's preface to the second part of his Second Life of St. Francis. The principal manuscript comes from Florence and was assembled at Assisi in 1318; a prefatory note describes it as "a collection of various ancient writings which the companions of Blessed Francis put down in different places and caused to be set down". It embraces the original *Legend of the Three Companions*, set down at Greccio in 1246, as well as the later parchments written by Brother Leo in Assisi and Portiuncula; the texts have been assembled from different sources and reproduced with considerable faithfulness, except for the addition of some explanations and pious phrases. The credit of proving these facts, or at least of blazing the trail for later discoveries, is due to Sabatier, even though he ascribed too much of the material to Brother Leo alone and was seriously mistaken as concerns the date, which he places a century too early.

It has become apparent that Sabatier's *Speculum* is not the only collection of its kind. The one that comes next to it as regards extent and reliability is the manuscript from Perugia which Delorme published with careful notes under the title of *Legenda antiqua*. Part of its contents are also to be found in the collection which Lemmens published in 1901, believing it to be the original version of the *Speculum*. This is also introduced as a collection of reminiscences "which were found in the writings of the saintly Brother Leo and other companions of Blessed Francis and are not mentioned in the general legend" (that of Bonaventure).<sup>(13)</sup> The order of the various texts in this edition differs from that in Sabatier's *Speculum* as was to be expected when one considers the peculiarity of the sources used, which consisted of separate bundles of loose pages.<sup>1</sup> It is, however, evident that they were taken from one and the same source,<sup>(14)</sup> i.e. the *scripta* of the Three Companions of 1246 and Brother Leo's *rotuli* of the sixties of that century.

All these variants of the *Speculum*, as well as the lesser collections of texts, which we mention in our bibliography were composed by "Spirituals" between the thirteenth and fourteenth century, with a few negligible textual variations, so small that they are of no practical importance.<sup>(15)</sup> The only real difference is in the arrangement of the separate texts, although some groups of texts follow in the same order in all editions.

<sup>1</sup> A parallel case is the varying arrangement of Pascal's posthumous papers in the different editions of the *Pensées*.

With these different branches of the *Speculum* tree before him, the present editor saw himself faced with a task that has not yet been tackled: to arrange the traditional texts of Brother Leo and the Companions in a satisfactory order. The ancient compilers attempted to do this in various ways, each group illustrating a particular virtue. To-day it seems improbable that this order would create the impression the old writers wished to bring forth. We have felt that the most natural order is the chronological one. A careful sifting of the material produced a series of pictures after the manner of the ancient legends, a series intended to show "the Aims and Sufferings of St. Francis among his Brethren". The historical importance of the material has been recognized by nearly all the specialists of recent times. Minocchi says:(16) "I have read the *Speculum* over and over again, and the deep and lasting impression it creates remains the same every time."

It occurred to me to quote a few eye-witnesses who are not represented in the connected legends, naturally mentioning my sources. Thus I have been able to fill up some gaps which, according to the prefatory letter of the Three Companions, existed in the memory of Brother Leo and his friends. On the whole the reminiscences of the disciples of St. Francis go to form a composite image of him which may be compared, by the manner in which it is reflected by several facets, to the radiant portrait of the Saviour which emerges from the four-fold Gospel. Brother Leo plays the role of St. John the Evangelist. The tone of his recital is quite different from that used by the other witnesses. He is especially intent on preaching the gospel of "Perfect Poverty".

Does it contain any message for the men and women of our day? A glance at the social conditions which prevail now is enough to make us think that it does. True, for St. Francis and his companions Poverty represented the lady of their hearts because they chose her voluntarily, out of their love for her, she was not forced upon them by outer circumstances. But who would command the Spirit that "bloweth where it listeth"? Outward forms are imposed by the times and pass away; it is certain that the form St. Francis imposed on his life did not correspond as exactly to that of the life of Christ as the Saint imagined. But it is the spirit that counts, and not the outward form.

Many readers, lovers of literature, yet not devoid of appreciation for sanctity, may find the weight and stress which is laid on the theme of poverty in Brother Leo's reminiscences not to their taste.

But even they will see, gradually unfolding out of many things that seem strange to them, the picture of a saint that one cannot consider without deep emotion, a picture that even Sabatier with all his art could not present more movingly. And Brother Leo has no other axe to grind except to present the original experience of the Saint as it really was, free from "prudent adaptations". We are given revealing glimpses of the spiritual life of a man who desired nothing less than to "become a second Christ", and therefore suffered the Saviour's torments and partook of His joys. Brother Leo is a loving disciple who says what he has to say with absolute truthfulness. Therefore he was able to show us a saint in a manner almost unique in hagiography, making us understand Francis's humanity, his courage and the human weaknesses against which he contended, and showing us the man who, though he might be conquered by the majority, triumphed in the end through humility and love.

The question that some may ask, not without reason, whether Francis rightly understood the teaching by which he lived, is of less importance, from a spiritual point of view, than the manner in which he followed the Call he had received.

## THE BEGINNINGS OF THE MYSTICAL BROTHERHOOD

(1209-1215)

### I (I)

AT THE inception of the Order, when Blessed Francis was staying at Rivotorto with the only two companions he had with him at the time, a man named Giles (Egidio) who was to become the third brother, left the world and was received into the community.

For some days he remained clothed in the raiment he had brought with him from the world, until one day a beggar came to ask Blessed Francis for alms. The holy father turned to Giles and said to him: "Give our poor brother your cloak!" Giles gladly took the cloak off his own back and gave it to the beggar. And he felt that God instantly sent new grace into his heart when he had given up his cloak so joyously. So he was received by Blessed Francis and continued to progress to the highest perfection of virtue.(2)

## 2 (3)

At the beginning of his conversion Blessed Francis, like a wise architect, placed himself with God's help on to a firm foundation-stone, namely the perfect humility and poverty of the Son of God. For that reason, out of his deep humility, he called his community the Brothers Minor. (4)

For this reason, from the beginning of the order, he wished the friars to go into the lazar-houses to serve the lepers and ground themselves in holy humility. For nobles and commoners came into the Order, and among other things he bade them serve the lepers humbly and stay in their houses; as it is set down in the first Rule: "They shall desire to possess nothing under the sun save holy poverty, through which they will be nourished by God with corporal and spiritual food in this life, and will in the future receive the heavenly heritage." (5)

## 3 (6)

The holy father said: "The servant of God should satisfy the needs of his body in eating, drinking, sleeping and other necessities with discretion, so that Brother Body should not murmur, saying: 'I can no longer stay upright and say my prayers, nor can I overcome my tribulations, nor do any good to others, because you will not satisfy my needs!'

"But if the servant of God satisfies his body with discretion, good will and honesty, and Brother Body persists in being negligent, lazy and sleepy at prayers, vigils and good works, then he must chastise the body like a lazy, bad beast of burden that would only eat without earning its keep by carrying its load."

## 4 (7)

Blessed Francis was not ashamed to beg meat for an ailing brother in the public places of the town; but he would exhort the sick to bear their infirmities patiently and not to rebel against it if they did not get all they wanted. He included this counsel in the first Rule (Chapter 10).

## 5 (8)

When the first companions had collected round Blessed Francis and he stayed with them at Rivotorto near Assisi, it happened one night when all the brethren were sleeping, that about midnight one of them suddenly cried out: "I am dying! I am dying!" All the brothers started up in amazement and terror.

Blessed Francis arose and said: "Get up, my brothers, and fetch a light!" When the lamp had been lit, he asked: "Which is the one who said he was dying?" And that brother answered: "It is I." And Francis said: "What ails you, brother? Why should you be dying?" The man answered: "I am dying of hunger."

Thereupon Blessed Francis immediately had a meal prepared, and with his usual charitableness and tact he shared it with the brother, so that the latter should not be ashamed to eat alone, and by his wish all the other friars also ate. . . . After they had finished, Blessed Francis said to the brethren: "Beloved ones, I tell you that everyone must consider his own nature; if one of you can sustain himself with less nourishment than another, I would not have one who needs more food imitate him, but I wish him to consider his nature and allow his body what it needs, so that it may be in a fit state to serve his spirit. . . . For God 'will have mercy and not sacrifice' " [Matt. ix. 13].

## 6 (9)

(Once, when a brother was very sick) Blessed Francis said to himself: "If this brother were to eat ripe grapes early in the morning, I think it would do him good." . . . The next morning he arose very early and secretly called the ailing brother and led him to a vineyard near the hermitage. And he chose a vine on which the grapes were good to eat, and sitting down beside it with the friar, he also began to eat grapes so that his companion should not feel ashamed of eating alone. . . . And that same friar remembered the charity and pity which the holy father had shown him, as long as he lived. (10)

## 7 (11)

When Blessed Francis saw that God wished to increase the numbers of his brethren, he said to them: "My dearest brothers and sons, I see that God wants to multiply our numbers, therefore it seems right and godly to me that we should acquire, either from the bishop or from the canons of San Ruffino, or from the abbot of St. Benedict, some church where the brethren can say their hours. Then we would need only a little hut of mud and wattle where they could rest and work." . . . All the brethren agreed.

So he went to the Bishop of Assisi and repeated the aforementioned words to him, but the bishop said: "Brother, I have no church I could give you." And the canons gave him the same answer.

Then he went to the abbot of St. Benedict's monastery on Monte Subasio and laid the same proposition before him. The abbot was moved by true piety, so, after taking counsel with his monks, he was inspired by the grace and the will of God to offer Blessed Francis and his brethren the church of Blessed Mary of Portiuncula, which was the smallest and poorest of his churches. The abbot said to Blessed Francis: "Here, Brother, we give you what you wanted. And if God is pleased to multiply your congregation, we would have this place to be your headquarters."

Blessed Francis and his brethren were greatly pleased with these words, and the Saint was delighted with the place that had been assigned to the community, chiefly because it was named after the Mother of Christ and also because it was such a poor little church. The fact that it was called Portiuncula (the little portion) seemed to predestine it as the motherhouse and headquarters of the Poor Little Brethren or Brothers Minor. Actually it was called Portiuncula because that province had been thus named since antiquity. . . . In olden times it was also called St. Mary of the Angels, because it was said that the singing of angels was often heard there.

Although the abbot and the monks had granted Blessed Francis and his brethren free use of the church, the Saint, as the good and wise master that he was, desired to found his house, i.e. the Order, on the solid foundations of utmost poverty. Therefore every year he sent to the said abbot and monks a jar full of the little fish called

"*Laschae*" (12) in token of humility and poverty, to signify that the brethren had no place of their own and would not dwell in any house that did not belong to another, and thus had no power to dispose of property or sell it. (13)

When the friars brought the monks their annual tribute of fishes, the Benedictines always gave them a jar full of oil, for the sake of Blessed Francis's meekness in doing this of his own free will.

We, who were with Blessed Francis at the time, give witness that he himself affirmed the following concerning this church: that it had been revealed to him that among all the churches dear to the Blessed Virgin, this was the one she loved best, because of the abundant grace God had poured out there.<sup>1</sup>

## 8 (14)

At the time when he was staying near St. Mary of Portiuncula with only a few brothers, Blessed Francis went to the villages and churches around Assisi, preaching and exhorting men to repent. He always carried a broom to sweep out dirty churches, for it distressed him exceedingly when he saw a church which was not cared for as he would have wished. . . .

## 9 (15)

So he once went into a village church in the diocese of Assisi [according to tradition, at Notiano, three hours' walk north-east of Assisi], and began humbly to sweep and clean the floor. This was immediately noised around in the whole village, for the people there loved to see and hear him. Among others, a rustic of marvellous simplicity, whose name was John (Giovanni), heard about it while he was ploughing his field. He forthwith went to the church, where he found Blessed Francis humbly and devoutly sweeping the floor, and he said to him: "Brother, give me the broom, I want to help you." And taking the broom from Blessed Francis's hands, he finished sweeping the floor.

<sup>1</sup> The stress laid on the privileged position of the Portiuncula is actually directed against the great cathedral San Francesco, which Brother Elias, thus scandalizing the first companions of the Saint, caused to be erected on the hill as the headquarters of the Order.

Later, as they were sitting down together, he said to Blessed Francis: "Brother, for a long time I have wanted to serve God, especially since I have heard what people say about you and your brethren, but I did not know how I could get to you. But now that God has willed that I should see you, I will do anything you say."

Blessed Francis rejoiced at his fervour; all the more because he then had so few followers and he felt that a man of such simplicity and candour must make a good religious. So he said: "Brother, if you want to share our life and our company, you must renounce all you have . . . and give it to the poor, according to the teaching of the Holy Gospels. . . ." Hearing this, the man promptly returned to the field and unharnessed his oxen; then he led one of them before Blessed Francis and said: "Brother, for many years have I served my father and all my family; though my portion of the inheritance be small, I will claim this ox as my portion, and give him to the poor as you think best." But when the man's parents and his younger brothers, who were still children, saw that he meant to forsake them, they all began to weep aloud and to sob and cry most pitifully, so that Blessed Francis was moved by compassion at the sight of so large a family of simple people . . . . Blessed Francis said to them: "This son of yours wants to serve God, and you should not grieve about this, but rather should you rejoice . . . all our brothers will be your brothers and your sons as well. And when a creature is of God and desires to serve his Creator—and to serve Him is to rule—I neither can nor may give him back to you. But so that you should take comfort, I want him to dispossess himself of this ox and give it to you, who are very poor. . . ." And they were all comforted by the words of St. Francis and very glad of the ox which was given back to them, because they were extremely poor.

And because Blessed Francis liked nothing better in himself and in others than pure and holy simplicity, he immediately vested John with the habit and, in his humility, took him around with him as his constant companion. The new friar was so simple-minded that he thought he must copy everything he saw Blessed Francis do. Thus, when the holy father was praying in a church or some other place, John would watch him so that he might imitate every one of his acts and gestures. Whenever Blessed Francis bent his knees or raised



his hands to heaven, even whenever he coughed or sighed, Brother John would do exactly the same. Blessed Francis, noticing this, corrected him with gentle merriment for behaving in this simple-minded manner. But Brother John answered: "Brother, I promised I would do all that you do, and so it is right that I should copy you in all things."

And Blessed Francis was amazed and overjoyed to find such pure simplicity. And indeed, Brother John progressed so rapidly that Blessed Francis and the other brethren marvelled at his perfection, and not long afterwards he died in a state of holy virtue.<sup>(16)</sup> Later, Blessed Francis would recall his conversation with great mirth and merriment when he was with the brethren, and he always spoke of him not as Brother John, but as *Saint John*.

#### 10 (17).

St. Francis used to say that the Brothers Minor had been sent by God in this new age to show the example of their lives to those who were wrapped in darkness. He said he perceived the sweetest fragrance and the savour of precious unguents when he heard of the great deeds performed by the brethren who were scattered over the world.

One day it happened that a brother insulted another with harsh words in the presence of a nobleman from the island of Cyprus.<sup>(18)</sup> When he saw that his brother was somewhat distressed, he was inflamed by wrath against himself, and taking up the droppings of an ass, which he put into his mouth and crushed with his teeth, he said: "The tongue that has spewed out the venom of malice against my brother shall taste dung!" When the nobleman saw this, he was so amazed and edified that he begged the brethren to dispose of his person and all his property.

All the brethren observed the rule that when one of them had insulted or grieved another, he should immediately prostrate himself at his feet and kiss them, begging his pardon most humbly. The holy father exulted each time he heard that his sons had given a good example of their own accord, and he poured out his blessings on those friars who, by words or by deeds, had brought sinners to love Christ.

## II (19)

Although Blessed Francis desired his sons to live in peace with all men and to bear themselves with humility towards everybody, he always told them and showed them by his own example that the greatest reverence was due to clerics. He said: "We have been sent to help the clerics towards the salvation of souls, and where they fall short, we are to make up for it. Every man will receive his ultimate reward not according to the authority he exercised, but according to the work he has accomplished. Know, my brothers, that the harvest of souls pleases God exceedingly, and we can reap a better one by keeping peace with the clerics than through discord. And if they themselves impede the salvation of the people, the revenge is God's and He will make retribution to them in His own time. Therefore be submissive to the prelates and let no wrongful zeal surge up from among you. If you are sons of peace, you will win both the clergy and the people, and that is more acceptable to God than if you were to win the people only and scandalize the clergy. Cover up their lapses and supplement their multifarious failings; and when you have done so, let your humility be even greater.<sup>1</sup>

## 12 (20)

Among the virtues Blessed Francis cherished most and desired to see in himself and his brethren, the foremost after the foundation of holy humility was the beauty of pure chastity. Thus, wishing to teach his brethren to keep their eyes pure, he used to tell them this parable about immodest eyes. "A pious and mighty king sent two successive messengers to the queen. The first returned, repeated word for word what the queen had told him and said nothing more about her. For he had kept the eyes in his head wisely in order and had not allowed them to stray over her person. Then the other messenger returned, and after a few words, he launched out on a long

<sup>1</sup> Compare the 19th Chapter of the Rule of 1221, the *admonitiones* 26 and the testament (no. 3) and many similar passages in the older legends. The advice given here is characteristic of St. Francis, who hoped to renew the Church not in setting out to combat abuses, but in attempting to abolish them through the force of good examples. Sabatier says: "*On se tromperait donc en croyant que c'est par une sorte de calcul politique qu'il se montre respectueux de la hiérarchie ecclésiastique; son respect est tout imprégné d'amour. Il est vrai, parce qu'il est intérieur*" (Spec. p. 94).

panegyric of the queen's beauty. "Truly, Lord, I have seen the most beautiful woman—happy the man who can enjoy her!"

The king said to him: "You wretched slave, you have cast impudent eyes on my wife, maybe you thought to gain by stealth the beauties you saw!"

He then ordered the first messenger to be recalled and said to him: "What impression did you have of the queen?" "An excellent one, for she listened willingly and patiently," replied the messenger wisely. And the king asked: "Has she got great beauty?" The man answered: "My Lord, that is for you to decide, my task was to report her words to you."

The king then decreed: "You have chaste eyes, and because you are a pure man you may be in my chamber and share my delights. But this lecher must leave my house, lest he pollute my bed!"

And the Saint said: "Who should not fear to gaze at the bride of Christ?" (21)

### 13 (22)

When the first brethren joined Blessed Francis, he was overjoyed at their conversion and that God should have given him such good companions. He cherished and respected them so that he would not ask them to go out and beg for alms, and as he thought they might be ashamed to go begging, he went out alone to beg every day, so as to spare their feelings.

But this made him very weary, for he had been delicately reared in the world and was not robust by nature, besides all his abstinences and afflictions had weakened him still further. So, seeing he would not be able to bear the whole burden alone . . . he said to them: "My dearest brothers and sons, do not be ashamed of begging for alms, since God Himself became poor in this world for our sakes, and we are following His example by choosing true poverty. For poverty is the heritage which our Lord Jesus Christ has acquired for us and left to us and to all those who desire to live in holy poverty, following His example. Indeed, I tell you that many of the most noble and saintly of this generation will join this congregation and deem it a great grace to go out begging. Go therefore, to ask for alms with confidence and a glad heart, with God's blessing. And you must go forth willingly and joyously, for to him who gives you

money, you can give the love of God, and when you ask for alms, say: 'For the love of the Lord God, give us alms'—and compared to this love, heaven and earth are as nothing."

While there were so few brethren, he could not send them out in pairs, so he sent each one separately through the fortress-towns and villages. And when the brethren returned with the alms they had received, each one would show Blessed Francis what had been given him, and one would say to the other: "Look, I have brought home more than you!" And Blessed Francis was happy to see them so merry and jocund, and since then everyone willingly asked to be allowed to go out begging. (23)

## 14 (24)

The blessed father taught the brethren to value books according to their contents and not according to their price, to the edification they afforded and not to their beauty. The books were to be few and to belong to the community, at the disposal of any friar who needed them. The poverty of their bedding and couches was indeed copious and abundant: if one of them had some rags to spread over his straw, he looked upon it as a luxury. Blessed Francis also desired his brethren to make their habitations very poor and to build their huts of wood, not of stone. He wanted them to be constructed with the greatest simplicity. Not only did he hate pompous buildings, he also had a horror of numerous or exquisite utensils. He liked nothing on the table or among the vessels that looked worldly or reminded one of the world, and he wanted all things to indicate poverty and to proclaim their life as a pilgrimage and an exile.

## 15 (25)

As a true friend and imitator of Christ, Francis despised all worldly things, and above all he execrated money. He taught his brethren by words and by his example to shun it as they would the devil. He taught the brethren the maxim that dung and money should hold the same place in our affections. One day it happened that a layman entered the church of Blessed Mary of Portiuncula to pray, and as an offering for his petition put down some money behind the crucifix.

When he had gone, a friar who was very simple took the money in his hand and laid it on the window-sill. When Blessed Francis heard of this and the friar saw himself discovered, he came running to beg forgiveness and, prostrating himself on the ground, declared himself ready to be chastised.

Blessed Francis accused him and scolded him severely for having touched the money, and he ordered him to take it from the window-sill, to carry it outside the enclosure and to deposit it there on the heap of asses' dung. All who saw and heard this were filled with great fear, and from then on they had an even greater contempt of money, having seen it compared to asses' dung. And daily they were animated by new examples to despise it from the bottom of their hearts. (26)

## 16 (27)

Once Blessed Francis met a poor man, and considering his misery, he said to his companion: "The poverty of this man lays great shame on us, and it is a reproof to our poverty. It shames me most of all when I meet one who is poorer than I, seeing that I have chosen holy poverty as my mistress<sup>1</sup> and for my spiritual and corporal delight, and the tidings have been spread all over the world that I have professed my allegiance to poverty before God and man."

## 17 (28)

When Blessed Francis had come to preach at the hermitage near Rocca Bizzi (29) it happened that on the day when he was to give his sermon, a poor cripple came to him. Filled with compassion at so much misery, he began to talk about it to his companion, but the latter rejoined: "Brother, though he appears poor enough, who knows whether he would not be the richest man in the whole province if he had his will?"

Blessed Francis reprimanded him sharply, and he admitted his fault. Then the holy father said: "Will you perform the penitence I impose on you?" "Willingly," answered the other. Blessed Francis said: "Go and take off your tunic, and throw yourself naked at the poor man's feet, tell him in what manner you sinned by

<sup>1</sup> "Domina"—in the sense of the Middle Ages and the lays of the troubadours. St. Francis often uses the allegorical expressions "mistress" and "bride" for poverty.

maligning him and ask him to pray for you." So the friar went and did as Blessed Francis had told him. Then he got up, put on his tunic and went back to the holy father, who said: "Do you want to know in what way you sinned against that poor man and even against Christ Himself? When you see a beggar, you must always remember in whose Name he comes, and that Christ took upon Himself all our poverty and our infirmities. . . ."

## 18 (30)

Near Colle in the county of Perugia, Blessed Francis saw a man again whom he had last met in the world, and this man was destitute. Blessed Francis said to him: "My brother, how are you faring?" The man at once began furiously to call down curses on his master, saying: "How should I fare but ill, thanks to my master, may God damn him, for he has taken everything I possess!"

Seeing him thus persist in deadly hatred, Blessed Francis was filled with compassion for his soul and said: "Brother, forgive your master for the love of God, so that you can free your own soul, and perhaps he will restore to you what he has taken from you. Otherwise you will have lost your property and you will lose your soul as well." The man said: "I cannot forgive him before he has given me back what belongs to me." Thereupon Blessed Francis said: "Look, I will give you this cloak, and I beg you to forgive your master for the love of the Lord God." And suddenly the man's heart softened, touched by the kindness he had received, and he forgave his master the injuries he had done him.

## 19 (31)

At the time when Blessed Francis was dwelling near St. Mary of Portiuncula, a friar blessed with great spiritual poverty came along the road on his way back from begging alms in Assisi, and as he walked he praised God aloud with great gladness. As he approached the church of Blessed Mary, Blessed Francis heard him and immediately went out with the greatest fervour and joy and ran to meet him, and joyfully kissed him on the shoulder on which he had slung the bag containing the scraps. And he took the bag, hung it over

his own shoulder and carried it into the house of the brethren, saying before them all: "Thus would I have my brother go out and return with the alms he has received, happy and joyous and praising God."

## 20 (32)

One of the chief aims of Blessed Francis was to possess, outside the times of prayer and divine office, an uninterrupted joyfulness of spirit, both outwardly and inwardly. He loved to see it in his brethren, and he even reprovèd them many times when they displayed sadness or bitterness of spirit. He said that if the servant of God aimed to have and to hold both outwardly and inwardly that spiritual joy which arises from a pure heart and is acquired by prayerful devotion, the demons were unable to harm him and must say: "Since this servant of God is always so happy in tribulation and in prosperity, we cannot succeed in gaining entrance to him nor in harming him!" But the demons exult when they can extinguish or lessen the devotion and happiness which is given by pure prayer and other virtuous works. . . .

## 21 (33)

Once Blessed Francis reprovèd one of his companions who appeared with a doleful countenance, and he said to him: "Why do you make an outward show of grief and sadness because of your sins? This sadness is a matter between yourself and God, pray to Him to spare you out of His mercy and to give back to your soul the joy of its salvation of which your sins have deprived it. But when you are with me and others, try always to be joyful, for it is not seemly for a servant of God to show his brother or anyone else a sad and doleful countenance."

## 22 (34)

The love and compassion of Christ would fill Blessed Francis like strong wine, and the rapturous melodies that rose up in his heart found expression in Gallic song, the stream of divine whispers which he alone could hear gushing out in a flood of jubilation in the French tongue.

Sometimes he picked up a bit of wood from the ground, and, laying it on his left arm, he drew another stick across it, which he held in his right hand like a bow, as though he were playing a viol or some other instrument; then, suiting his movements to the rhythm, he would sing of our Lord Jesus Christ in the language of France. Yet this singing and dancing always ended in tears and his jubilation was resolved in compassion for Christ's sufferings. Then Blessed Francis would heave continuous sighs, and over his plaints and moans forget what he held in his hands, and thus be rapt towards heaven.

## 23 (35)

At that time Blessed Francis went to the church of San Pietro di Bovara, near the town of Trevi in the valley of Spoleto, and Brother Pacifico went with him, the same who had been called the King of Verse in the world and had been a master of courtly and popular song. The church was derelict and empty, and Blessed Francis said to Blessed Pacifico: "Do you go back to the lazar-house, for I would like to spend the night here alone, then come back to me early in the morning." Blessed Francis remained alone, and after he had said compline and other prayers, he wanted to rest and sleep, but he could not. His spirit was afraid, for he was aware of diabolical suggestions, so he quickly left the church, signed himself and said: "In the name of Almighty God I say to you, demons, that you can do to my body whatever the Lord Jesus Christ permits you to do, for I am ready to endure everything! For as the greatest enemy I have is my body, you can revenge me of my adversary and worst foe."

And immediately the temptation stopped and Blessed Francis returned to the place where he had lain and went to sleep peacefully.

Early next morning when Brother Pacifico returned to him, Blessed Francis was standing before the altar in prayer. Brother Pacifico waited for him outside the choir and prayed in a like manner before the cross. And when he began to pray, he was raised up and rapt to heaven, "whether in the body or out of the body, God alone knoweth" [2 Cor. xii. 2] and he saw heaven open and many thrones prepared, and one of them was more glorious than all the others, and enriched with flashing precious stones. . . .



And he heard a voice say to him: "This was the throne of Lucifer, and it will be the seat of the humble Francis."

When he returned to himself, Blessed Francis was coming towards him and the brother fell at his feet, crossed his arms and, considering him as though he were already seated on his throne in heaven, said: "Father, forgive me and pray the Lord to have mercy on me and to forgive my sins!" Blessed Francis stretched out his hand and raised him up. He knew at once that Brother Pacifico had had a vision while he was praying, for he saw that he was quite changed, addressing him not as one still living in the flesh, but as though he were already in heaven.

Brother Pacifico was reluctant to tell him of his vision, but he began to talk about other things and then said as though by accident: "What do you think of yourself, Brother?"

Blessed Francis replied: "I think I am the greatest sinner in the whole world." And at once something said to Brother Pacifico in his heart: "By this you can know that your vision was true, when you saw that Lucifer had been ejected from his throne because of his pride, but Francis, because of his humility, deserves to be exalted and to take his seat thereon."

## ST. FRANCIS AND THE PAPAL COURT (1215-1218)

24 (36)

We have spoken before of the venerable father, the Lord Cardinal John of San Paolo, who often supported Blessed Francis with his counsel and his protection. He praised the life and acts of the Saint and his brethren to all the other Cardinals, so that their hearts were inclined towards the man of God and his friars, so much so indeed that each one of them wanted to have one of these friars at his court, not for any advantage they might get from them, but because of the sanctity of the friars and the devotion they had for them.

When the Lord John of San Paolo had died, God inspired one of the Cardinals, Ugolino by name, at that time Bishop of Ostia, to cherish, protect and nourish Blessed Francis and his friars most diligently. He did this with as much fervour as though he had been

the father of all of them, extending to them an even greater love than that which a bodily father lavishes on the sons of his loins. . . . When the man of God heard the Cardinal being spoken of so highly, for his fame and glory among the other cardinals was very great, he went to him with his friars. The Cardinal received them joyfully and said: "I offer myself to you as your counsellor and defender. . . ."

Then Blessed Francis, giving thanks to God, said to the Lord Cardinal: "My Lord, I would have you for our father and for the defender of the Order, and I will have the brethren include you in all their prayers." Then Blessed Francis begged him to attend at the Chapter of the brethren at Whitsuntide (1216) and the Cardinal assented benignly, and from that time on he always attended their Chapter.

## 25 (37)

In Rome those two shining lights of the world, namely Blessed Francis and Blessed Dominic, were at the same time before the Lord Cardinal of Ostia, who later became the Sovereign Pontiff. They were discoursing most mellifluously of God, and the Cardinal said to them: "In the primitive Church the pastors and prelates were poor men, inflamed not by cupidity, but by charity. Why do we not make bishops and prelates of your friars, so that they might lead all others by their knowledge and their example?"

Then a most humble and devout controversy took place between the two saints, as to who was to answer: each wanted to defer to the other and let him begin. While the humility of Francis won the victory as he did not speak first, Dominic also won by answering first out of humble obedience.

Blessed Dominic answered as follows: "Lord, my friars have already been enough exalted, if they care to see it, and as far as it is in my power, I will never allow that anything be added to their dignities."

Then Blessed Francis, bowing before the said lord, replied: "My Lord, my friars are called Brothers Minor so that they should not presume to become more. Their vocation teaches them to remain lowly and to imitate the humility of Christ, and in the eyes of the saints they will be most exalted for this very reason. . . ."

These were the answers of the saints, and when they had finished the Lord Bishop of Ostia was greatly edified and rendered thanks to God.

As they were going away together, Blessed Dominic asked Blessed Francis to honour him by giving him the cord with which he girded his habit, but Blessed Francis in his humility refused to grant what Blessed Dominic asked him in his charity. But in the end the devotion of Blessed Dominic won the day; by dint of the vehemence of his pleading, he received the cord of Blessed Francis and he fastened it under his tunic, and from then on always wore it with great piety. Then each laid his hands into the hands of the other and they most lovingly took leave of one another. St. Dominic said to St. Francis: "I wish, Brother Francis, that your Order and mine were one, and that we might live in the Church according to the same rule." And after they had parted from each other, Blessed Dominic said to several who were present: "Truly, I tell you, all religious should imitate that holy man Francis, such is the perfection of his sanctity." (38)

26 (39)

At the time when Blessed Francis was visiting the Cardinal Bishop of Ostia, who later became Pope Gregory, he furtively went out at dinner-time to beg for alms, and when he returned the Cardinal was already sitting at table with many knights and nobles. Then Blessed Francis laid the crusts of black bread he had received on the table in front of the Cardinal, and came and sat down beside him, for the Cardinal always desired the Saint to sit next to him. The Cardinal was a little embarrassed, chiefly because of the other guests. After eating a little, Blessed Francis took the crusts and offered them to all the knights and chaplains of the Lord Cardinal, as gifts from the Lord God. And they all accepted them with great gladness and devotion . . . and some of them consumed them at once, while others kept them piously. . . . After dinner the Cardinal took Blessed Francis with him to his chamber and, holding out his arms, embraced him heartily and joyously, saying:

"Why, O my simplest of brothers, did you shame me to-day by going out to beg for alms when you have come to my house, which is the house of your brethren?"

Blessed Francis replied: "My Lord, I have honoured you all the more in honouring my divine Lord, who rejoices in poverty, and even more when it is voluntary. . . ."

And the Cardinal was much edified by the words of Blessed Francis and said to him: "My son, do whatever seems good in your eyes, for God is with you and you are with Him!"

27 (40)

When the Cardinal of Ostia, who later became Pope Gregory, came to the Chapter of the brethren at St. Mary of Portiuncula (1216), all the friars came out to meet him in solemn procession. As soon as he saw them, he dismounted from his horse and walked up with them to the church. He then delivered a sermon and celebrated Mass, and the servant of God Francis intoned the Gospel.(41) . . . When the Cardinal, with many knights and clerics, came to the dormitory of the brethren and saw how they lay on the bare ground with no other bedding but a little straw . . . he began to weep before all who were present and said: "Look how the brethren sleep, while we have so many superfluous luxuries. What is to become of us?" And he and all the others were much edified.

28 (42)

*(From a letter of Jacques de Vitry [Jacobus Vitriacensis] a prominent prelate, later a Cardinal, dated October 1216)*

"For some time I was at the Papal Court (of Pope Honorius III at Perugia), where I saw much that distressed me. Everybody was so preoccupied with secular and temporal matters, pertaining to kings and kingdoms, to disputes and law-suits, that one could hardly speak of spiritual things.

"One solace, however, I have found in these parts. Great numbers of men and women, many of them worldly and wealthy, have forsaken everything for Christ and abandoned the world. They are called Brothers Minor, and the Pope and the Cardinals hold them in great esteem. They do not trouble at all about temporal things, but strive every day with fervent longing and vehement zeal to save souls which are in danger, detaching them from the world and

guiding them. Already by the grace of God they have reaped a rich harvest, gaining many souls. . . .

"They live according to the tenets of the primitive church, of which it is written 'the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul' (Acts iv. 32). In daytime they go out into the towns and villages, so as to harvest souls by active work, at night they return to the hermitage or some solitary retreat and practise meditation.

"The women immure themselves in divers hospices near the towns; they accept no gifts, but live by the work of their hands. It distresses and perturbs them when clerics and laymen honour them more than they desire.<sup>1</sup>

"The men of the order meet once a year with great spiritual gain, at an appointed place, so that they can rejoice in God and eat together, take counsel with good men<sup>2</sup> and promulgate their holy institutions, which are confirmed by the Pope. Then they disperse again for a year and go to Lombardy, Tuscany, Apulia and Sicily. Even the Pope's secretary, Brother Nicolas, a holy and religious man, left the court so as to join them, but he was called back by the Pope, to whom he is indispensable. . . ."

## 29 (43)

Eleven years after he had begun his new way of life (1217) (44) when the numbers and merits of the brethren had multiplied, ministers were elected and sent with a few friars to all the provinces of the world where the Catholic faith was observed. In some provinces they were received, but not allowed to build Houses, from others they were expelled because people thought they were heretics. For although Pope Innocent III had confirmed their Order and their Rule, he had not given them a brief, and so the friars had to undergo much tribulation at the hands of both clerics and laymen. For this reason some of the brethren were forced to flee from several provinces, and thus persecuted and afflicted, sometimes even despoiled by robbers, they returned to Blessed Francis in great distress. They had to endure this in almost all the countries beyond the Alps, such as

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the Sisters of St. Clare, who had opened several Houses in Florence and other cities, from their headquarters in San Damiano.

<sup>2</sup> The protector of the order, Cardinal Ugolino, after the death of John of San Paolo.

Germany, Hungary and others. When the Lord Cardinal heard of this, he called Blessed Francis and took him to Pope Honorius, for Pope Innocent was then already dead, and the second Rule of Blessed Francis, which he had set down at the bidding of Christ, was solemnly confirmed with a papal bull by Pope Honorius. [1223]

## 30 (45)

After that Chapter (Whitsun 1217) to which many friars were sent from the provinces beyond the sea, Blessed Francis remained behind with a few brothers, and he said to them: "My dearest brothers, it is necessary that I should be a pattern and example to all the brethren; therefore, as I have sent my brothers to endure hardships and ignominies, hunger and thirst and other trials in distant parts, it is just and consistent with holy humility that I also should go to some far distant province; the brethren will bear their adversities with greater patience when they hear that I am undergoing the same trials. Therefore go and pray God that He should let me choose the province where I can serve His glory best. . . ."

. . . So the brethren went to pray, and when they had finished praying, they returned to him. And at once he said to them joyfully: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the glorious Virgin Mary and all the other saints, I choose the province of France, where there are Catholic people who, more than any other Catholics, reverence the Body of Our Lord, which pleases me greatly; therefore I will most willingly go and dwell among them. . . ."

. . . When Blessed Francis had chosen the friars who were to accompany him, he said to them: "In the name of God, go two by two on your way in humility and honesty, and keeping silence from matins till terce, praying to God in your hearts. Idle and unnecessary words should not be exchanged between you. For even though you are on a journey, your conversation must be as humble and honest as though you were in an hermitage or in your cell. For wherever we are and walk, our cell is always round us, because Brother Body is our cell, and the soul is the hermit who dwells therein, praying to God and meditating on Him. Therefore if the soul cannot remain in silence in her cell, a religious cell built by human hands will be of little avail."

When he arrived in Florence, the Saint encountered the Lord Cardinal Ugolino, who was later Pope Gregory. (46) When the said Cardinal heard from Blessed Francis that he wanted to go to France, he forbade him to go, saying: "Brother, I do not wish you to go beyond the Alps, because there are many prelates who would gladly harm your Order at the Papal Court. But I and the other Cardinals who value it will protect and help you all the more willingly if you remain within our province." Then Blessed Francis said: "Lord, I would feel great shame that I sent off brethren of mine into distant countries if I myself were to stay in this province and were not to share in the trials that they will endure for the Lord." Then the Bishop, as it were reproaching him, said: "Why did you send your brothers so far away to die of hunger and to endure so many other tribulations?" Blessed Francis was moved by the spirit of prophecy and answered with great fervour: "Lord, do you believe that the friars were sent to this country only? I tell you truthfully that God chose and sent out the brothers for the progress and salvation of the souls of all men in the world. They will not only be received in the lands of the faithful, but in those of the infidels as well, and they will gain many souls."

The Bishop of Ostia was amazed at his words, and admitted that he spoke the truth, yet he did not allow him to go to France, and so Blessed Francis sent Brother Pacifico and many others. He himself returned to the valley of Spoleto. (47)

### 31 (48)

Blessed Francis entreated Pope Honorius to appoint one of the Cardinals of the Roman Church, to wit the Lord Cardinal of Ostia, as father of the Order, so that the brethren might turn to him in case of need. For in a vision, which may have induced him to ask for the Cardinal's protection, Blessed Francis had seen a little black hen with feathered legs and feet like a tame dove, who had so many chicks that she could not cover them with her wings. The little chickens ran round and round the hen, without any protection.

When he awoke from his sleep, he began to ponder on that vision, and all at once he knew through the Holy Spirit that he himself was meant by the hen, and he said: "I am that hen, small in stature, black

by nature, and I must be as simple as a dove; my feet are winged by the force of my affections, to enable me to fly to heaven. And by His great mercy the Lord has given me many sons, whom I cannot defend by my own power. Therefore I must recommend them to Holy Church, so that she may protect and govern them under the shadow of her wings."

A few years had elapsed since the aforesaid vision. Blessed Francis came to Rome to visit the Cardinal of Ostia, who bade the Saint come with him to the Papal Court on the following morning, for he wanted him to preach before the Pope and the Cardinals and to recommend his Rule to them with affectionate zeal. Although Blessed Francis begged to be excused, saying that he was a simple and ignorant man, the Cardinal insisted on taking him to the Court. When Blessed Francis presented himself to the Pope and the Cardinals, they looked at him with merriment. He arose and preached to them, saying only what the Holy Spirit inspired him to say. When he had finished his sermon, he recommended his Order to the Pope and all the Cardinals, and they were greatly edified by his preaching, and their hearts were filled with a much warmer affection for the Order.(49) . . . Blessed Francis, seeing the loyalty and affection the said Cardinal of Ostia showed towards the brethren, began to love him from the bottom of his heart. And knowing by divine revelation that the Cardinal would one day be Pope, he always foretold it in the letters he wrote him, calling him the Father of the whole world. This is how he addressed him: "Venerable Father in Christ of the whole world."(50)

## 32 (51)

. . . Some high prelates who were assembled in that place, having heard that St. Francis preached to birds and men and knowing that he was simple and unlearned, summoned him, saying they wanted to hear him preach, as he was so addicted to preaching. Then a Bishop (Cardinal Ugolino), who was his friend, fearing that the holy man might be confused, called him to his house and gave him the text of a well-composed and orderly sermon. But when the holy man arrived at that place, he could not utter the words that had been set down for him and which he had pondered over for a



long while—he had entirely forgotten them. As he was thus hesitating as to what he should do, placing his trust in God, he opened his breviary and his eyes fell on the words: “My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me” [Ps. xlv. 15]. And he transposed them into the vernacular and said many things about the insolence of the prelates and their bad example, and how the Church was totally confounded through them, who were her visible face, which should be radiant and shining with beauty. . . . And so strongly did he speak of these things that his hearers were confounded and edified.<sup>1</sup>

## THE BATTLE FOR POVERTY

33 (52)

(*Chronica Fratris Jordani a Jano, Ord. Fratrum Minorum*)

When Blessed Francis, accompanied by Blessed Peter of Cattaneo, who had been a doctor of law, crossed the sea, he left behind two vicars, Brother Matthew of Narnio and Brother Gregory of Naples. He instituted Matthew as vicar of St. Mary of Portiuncula; he was to remain there and accept postulants into the Order, while Gregory toured Italy to console the brethren. According to the first Rule, the friars were to fast on the fourth and sixth day of the week (Wednesday and Friday) and, by special licence of Blessed Francis, on the second day (Monday) and Saturday as well, and to eat meat on ordinary days; now the said vicars assembled a Chapter with some of the senior brethren of Italy and laid down that the friars were not

<sup>1</sup> Further details are given by Thomas of Celano in the *First Life*, I, 27: “St. Francis had come to Rome for the affairs of the Order and desired earnestly to speak of them to the Pope and the venerable Cardinals. When the Bishop of Ostia, Cardinal Ugo, heard of this, he was filled with fear and joy, because of his great devotion and affection for the Saint. He was amazed at Blessed Francis’s zeal and great simplicity, but trusting in the infinite mercy of God, who never forsakes a truly godly man in the hour of need, he presented him to the Pope and the Cardinals. When Francis stood before these high dignitaries, he first begged for their blessing and for leave to speak, and then he began to preach without fear, speaking with such glowing ardour that he was almost beside himself and moved his feet like a dancer as the words poured from his lips. Yet this was in no way undignified, for one could feel that he was burning with divine love, nor was it laughable, but rather apt to awaken contrition. And many of those present were moved and amazed at such grace from God and such fearlessness. The Cardinal of Ostia meanwhile prayed God earnestly that the Saint’s simplicity should not awaken derision, for the honour or shame of Francis was his own, as he had been appointed as the father of the community.”

These two descriptions complete each other admirably, the one implementing the other.

to eat meat on ordinary days, unless it had been spontaneously given them by the faithful. Furthermore they decreed that Monday should be a fast-day as well as the other two days, and that the friars were also to abstain from dairy produce on Monday and Saturday. . . .

A certain lay brother [Stephen] was indignant at these decrees, which presumed to add something to the rules laid down by the holy father, and taking the new constitution with him, he left without permission of the vicars and went across the sea [to join St. Francis, who had continued into Syria after the fall of Damietta, November 1219]. And when he had joined Blessed Francis, he first confessed that he had come to him without permission, and explained that he had been forced to do so by the fact that the vicars whom Blessed Francis had left behind had presumed to add new regulations to his Rule, adding that the Order was in a turmoil all over Italy, as not only the vicars but other friars as well had dared to make changes in the Rule.

Blessed Francis read the new constitution as he was sitting at table with a dish of meat before him. He then said to Brother Peter: "Sir Peter, what shall we do?" And the other answered: "Ah, Sir Francis, you must decide, you have the authority." Because Brother Peter was a learned man and a nobleman, Blessed Francis in his courtesy honoured him by always addressing him as "sir". And this mutual courtesy was observed between them beyond the sea as well as in Italy.

Blessed Francis then said: "Let us then do as the Gospel teaches us and eat what is placed before us. . . ."

. . . Brother Philip, who had been appointed guardian of the Poor Ladies, had obtained (against the wishes of Blessed Francis, who always preferred to overcome obstacles through humility rather than by appealing to the power of the law) a papal brief excommunicating anyone who should trouble the sisters. Likewise Brother John of Conpello [John of Capella] had assembled a great number of lepers of both sexes and withdrawn from the Order, and now contemplated founding a new Order. He had set down its Rule and had presented himself before the Pope in order to have it confirmed. Thus many disturbances had occurred during Blessed Francis's absence. . . .

Blessed Francis, taking with him Brother Elias and Brother Cesar [of Speyer] . . . and other friars, returned to Italy [1220]. And here,

after he had gone more deeply into the causes of the disturbance, he did not turn to its instigators, but to Pope Honorius III himself. . . .

## 34 (53)

Blessed Francis said: "I will go and recommend the Order of the Brothers Minor to the Holy Roman Church. The malevolent will fear the rod of her power and be corrected, and the sons of God will enjoy full liberty to further their eternal salvation. . . . No harm can come to the Order under the protection of the Church nor will the son of Belial trample the vineyard of the Lord with impunity. Our holy mother [Church] will emulate the glory of our poverty . . . and the pure evangelical observance will flower perpetually before her.

## 35 (54)

(*Chronica Fratris Jordani*)

Blessed Francis was waiting humbly outside the palace of the Supreme Pontiff, for he did not dare to knock at the doors of so great a prince, and waited patiently until he should come out of his own accord. When the Pope came out, Blessed Francis prostrated himself and said: "Father Pope, God give you peace." And the Pope answered: "God bless you, son." Then Blessed Francis said: "Lord, as you are so great and occupied with great things, the poor often fail to gain access to you or to speak to you when they would have need to do so. You have given me many fathers (i.e. Cardinals to protect the Order) but I want you to give me one with whom I can discuss my needs, who will take your place in hearing my petitions in my own matters and those of the Order and counselling me."

The Pope replied: "Who is the father you want me to give you, son?"

Blessed Francis answered: "The Cardinal of Ostia."<sup>1</sup> And to this the Pope agreed.

Later, when Blessed Francis related the cause of the disturbance to the Cardinal, his appointed father, the latter incontinently revoked

<sup>1</sup> He demanded the official appointment of a Cardinal-Protector, for up till then Cardinal Ugolino had given him "paternal advice" in an unofficial capacity. The Franciscan Rule of 1223 mentions a "*gubernator, protector et corrector istius fraternitatis*."

the constitution set up by Brother Philip, and Brother John with his followers was ignominiously dismissed from the Papal Court.

36 (55)

When Blessed Francis was passing through Bologna [in summer 1220, on his return from Syria] he heard that a new house had been built for the brethren. Hardly had he heard that this house was said to belong to the friars, when he turned round and left the city, and sent word that all the brethren were to leave the new house at once, and that not one of them should remain there. So all the friars moved out and even the sick did not stay behind, but were ejected with the others. The Lord Ugolino, Bishop of Ostia and Legate in Lombardy, announced publicly that the said house was his property. A brother who is still alive, who was among the sick who had to leave the house, gave witness of this and wrote it down. [Brother Leo.]

37 (56)

*(De legenda antiqua Beati Francisci)*

I saw a friar who heard Blessed Francis preach at Bologna and was told by eye-witnesses how the Saint entered the city with the intention of dwelling with the brethren, and then heard that they had built a house, which was not in accordance with the state of poverty they had vowed to maintain. Thereupon he turned round and went to the house of the preaching brothers (of St. Dominic), who received him with great joy. Among them was a preaching brother of great science and sanctity who felt such compassion with the brethren of Blessed Francis that he did not want him to stay with his own brethren and induced him to go back to them. . . . He found them ready to accept any penitence he might impose on them. . . . But he had to contend with the determination and obduracy of one of his friars, who in the world had been a doctor of law; this was Brother Peter Stacia [the provincial of Bologna]. Blessed Francis perceived that this friar's acts and doctrines were contrary to the purity of the Rule, and he cursed him.<sup>1</sup> Brother Peter Stacia had been great in the world, and the ministers were

<sup>1</sup> A passage in the "*Actus*", evidently written by Brother Leo, throws light on the real reason for the severity of the Saint. He is quoted as saying: "You would destroy my Order;

much attached to him because of his learning; therefore, when St. Francis was approaching the end of his life the brethren begged him to forgive this important man whom he had cursed and to give him his blessing. Shortly afterwards the said friar was on the point of death . . . and he began to tremble and to cry out: "I am damned, and here are the demons. . . ." And all who assisted were horror-stricken at the painful spectacle of this awesome and fearful judgment and understood that he whom Blessed Francis had cursed was accursed by God in all eternity. For he was not moved by human reasoning when he blessed or cursed anyone, but inspired by Christ to manifest to the brethren the secrets of the judgment and will of God, and he perceived the future as though it were the past.

## 38 (57)

At the time, when Blessed Francis had returned from beyond the sea, one of the ministers talked to him about the question of poverty, desiring to know his will and his ideas concerning it, chiefly because the Rule contained a chapter about the prohibitions of the Holy Gospels, for instance "that they should take nothing for their journey", etc. Blessed Francis answered: "I understand it thus that the brethren must possess nothing except their habit with the cord and their drawers, as the Rule says. And if necessity forces them thereto, they may wear shoes." The minister said to him: "But what am I to do, seeing I possess so many books that they are worth more than fifty pounds?" He said this because he wanted to keep his books with a clear conscience, for it pricked him for having so many, knowing as he did how strict Blessed Francis was in matters of poverty. Blessed Francis said: "I neither will, nor may, nor can go against my conscience and the perfection of the Holy Gospel, which we have vowed to observe." And hearing this, the minister was very sad.

## 39 (58)

When the Chapter was about to be convened (September 1220), Blessed Francis said to one of his companions: "It does not seem to

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my will and desire is that my brethren should follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ and spend more time in prayer than in studies" (ed. Sabatier 184). So it appears that the scientific spirit of the former doctor of laws threatened to replace religious meditation and inward devotion in the Order, thus going directly counter to St. Francis's ideals.

me that I would be a true Brother Minor unless I were in the state of mind I will now describe to you: say that the brethren invite me with great reverence and devotion to the Chapter, and I, moved by their devotion, go there with them. The assembled friars ask me to expound the word of God and preach to them. And I rise and preach to them as the Holy Spirit inspires me. Let us assume that when my sermon is over they all clamour against me, saying: 'We do not want you to reign over us, you have not the necessary eloquence, and you are too simple and ignorant. We feel ashamed to have such a simple and despicable superior, therefore no longer presume to call yourself our superior!' And so they depose me with vituperation and opprobrium. It does not seem to me that I would be a Brother Minor if I did not rejoice should they disparage me and shamefully depose me."

## 40 (59)

So as better to observe the virtue of holy humility, a few years after his conversion Blessed Francis laid down the office of superior before all the brethren assembled in Chapter (29 September 1220), saying: "From now on I am dead for you. Here is Brother Peter Cattaneo, whom I and all of you will obey." And prostrating himself before him, he promised him obedience and reverence.

Thereupon all the brethren wept, and cried aloud in their great sorrow, for it seemed to them that they had been orphaned of such a father. The blessed father arose and said, lifting his eyes to heaven and clasping his hands: "Lord, I recommend to thee the family which thou hast committed to my care up till now; to-day, because of the infirmities which thou knowest, O my sweet Lord, I can no longer care for them. I therefore commit them to the ministers who on the day of judgment will have to answer to thee, Lord, for any brother who should perish through their negligence, their bad example or their harsh correction."

And he remained a subordinate until his death, behaving with greater humility than any other.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis was impelled to relinquish his rightful position as founder of the Order by humility, and also by understanding that a new generation of academically educated men now surrounded him, who, despite their personal reverence for him, thought very differently than he in his mystic single-mindedness about such questions as the organization of the

## 41 (60)

Desiring to remain in perfect humility and subjection unto death, Blessed Francis said, a long time before he died, to his General Minister: "I want you to place one of my companions above me in your stead, so that I should obey him, and for the sake of holy obedience I want him to remain with me always in life and in death."

And from that day on until his death he had one of his companions as his guardian and obeyed him in all things, in the stead of the General Minister.

Once he said to his companions: "Among others, God has given me the grace that, if a novice who had entered the Order on that very day were assigned to me as my guardian, I would obey him as willingly as I would obey the first and eldest of the community."

## 42 (61)

The most holy father said to his brethren: "My dearest brothers, carry out an order at the first word, and do not wait for what is said to you to be repeated; even if it seems to you that an order is impossible to execute, do not refuse to do so, for even if I should ask of you something beyond your power, the power of holy obedience will not fail you."

## 43 (62)

Once, when he was sitting with his companions, he gave vent to the following complaint: "There is hardly a religious in the whole world who obeys his superior well!" Immediately the companions asked him: "Tell us, Father, what is the highest and most perfect way of obedience?" He answered them by describing the man who obeys truly and perfectly as one to be compared to a dead body. "Take an inanimate body and lay it down where you like. You will see that it will not resist when you move it, nor murmur at where

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community, its economic problems and its mission. When the Saint felt that he was confronted by a majority, and that even the Papal Court and Cardinal Ugolino sympathized with the new ideas, he laid down the responsibility for the Order. It was not compatible with his character to fight for his ideals, but the grief he experienced at seeing his ideal betrayed began to sap his vitality from that time on

you lay it, nor demand that you let it go. If you lift it up on to a throne, it will not strive higher, but sink lower: if you drape it in purple, it will be paler still. That man is truly obedient who does not judge why he is being moved, does not care where he is placed and does not demand to be transferred. When he is promoted to office he remains as humble as before, and the more he is honoured, the more unworthy he deems himself.”<sup>1</sup>

## 44 (63)

Returning to the church of St. Mary of Portiuncula, Blessed Francis found there Brother Jacob the Simple with a leper who was covered with sores. Blessed Francis had recommended this leper to him as well as all the others, and he was almost a physician to them, always ready to touch their sores, clean them and bandage them. For at that time many of the brethren stayed in the lazar-houses.

Blessed Francis said to Brother Jacob, reproving him: “You should not take our brothers in Christ around like this, it is not seemly, neither for you nor for them.” For although he wished the brethren to serve the lepers, he did not want them to take those who were covered with sores about outside the hospital, as they were so repugnant a sight to the people,<sup>2</sup> but the same Brother Jacob was so simple that he would walk with them from the hospital to the church of St. Mary, as though he were walking with his brethren. Blessed Francis himself called the lepers “our brothers in Christ”.

As soon as Blessed Francis had uttered these words, he rebuked himself, thinking he had put the leper to shame by reproaching Brother Jacob. Therefore, wanting to make amends to God and to the leper, he confessed his fault to Brother Peter Cattaneo, who was then General Minister, and he said: “I want you to confirm the penitence I have chosen to do for this error, and not to contradict me therein.” And Brother Peter had such veneration and fear of

<sup>1</sup> It goes without saying that St. Francis desired the truly obedient friar to surrender his own judgment in deciding whether a command was practical, but not to go against his conscience in questions of morality. “No one is bound by obedience to do something which infringes morality” (Ep. 2.).

<sup>2</sup> The care of the lepers was to remain an especial concern of the Saint as long as he lived, a leper having played so prominent a part in his own conversion. He recalled it in the introduction to his testament. The episode described above took place at Rivotorto, the civic lazar-house. According to the statutes quoted by Fortini (p. 131 f.), the lepers were forbidden to go outside in Assisi as elsewhere, but evidently the rule was not strictly adhered to.



him that he did not presume to contradict him, although he was often grieved that he could not do so.

Then Blessed Francis said: "This shall be my penitence, namely that I will eat out of one dish with my brother in Christ." So when Blessed Francis sat at table with the leper and the other brethren, a dish was placed between Blessed Francis and the leper. . . . The writer has seen these things and bears witness of them.

#### 45 (64)

Near the time for the general Chapter (Whitsun 1221) which was held every year at St. Mary of Portiuncula, the people of Assisi, seeing how the brethren multiplied daily and all of them assembled here, and that they had no shelter except a small thatched hut with walls of wattle and mud, decided to build a large house of stone and mortar for them. This they did in a few days, with great speed and devotion, without the consent of Blessed Francis, during his absence.

When Blessed Francis returned from some other province and came to the Chapter, he was greatly surprised by the house that had been built there. He feared that this house might incite other friars to have similar large houses built in the places where they dwelt, also he wished this place to remain a pattern and example for all the other hermitages of the Order; therefore, before the end of the Chapter, he climbed on to the roof of that house and called the friars up as well. And together with the brethren he began to throw down the tiles with which the house was roofed, intending to carry it off to the foundations.

Some knights of Assisi, who were there to guard the place because of the great crowds who came from afar to see the assembly of the friars, saw that Blessed Francis and the other brethren intended to destroy the house and immediately came to him and said: "Brother,<sup>1</sup> this house belongs to the municipality of Assisi, and we are here for that municipality. Therefore we forbid you to destroy our house." When Blessed Francis heard this, he said to them: "Well, if this

<sup>1</sup> Thomas of Eccleston (*Anal franc* I, 232): "Brother Martino of Barton . . . said that five thousand friars attended the Chapter when St. Francis ordered the house which had been built for the Chapter to be destroyed. His real corporal brother was seneschal of the Chapter and defended the house in the name of the municipality." So it can be assumed that the conversation took place between Francis and his brother Angelo.

house is yours, I will not touch it." And he and the other friars came down at once. . . .

## 46 (65)

Blessed Francis had laid down that the churches of the brethren should be small and their houses be made only of mud and wattle, in token of holy poverty and humility. He wished to begin his reform at the hermitage of St. Mary of Portiuncula, chiefly in regard to the houses of mud and wattle, so that this should be a perpetual memorial for all present and future brethren, as it was the first and principal House of the whole Order. Some of the brethren opposed him in this matter, saying that in some provinces wood was dearer than stone. . . .

Blessed Francis did not want to contend with them, especially as he was sick unto death. Therefore he caused to be written in his testament: "The brethren must watch that their churches, their dwellings and anything that is constructed for them be in accordance with holy poverty, and they must always live like pilgrims and strangers on a journey." (66)

We, who have been with him when he wrote the Rule and most of his other writings, bear witness that he caused many things to be set down in the Rule and in his other writings to which many friars were strongly opposed, especially our superiors and scholars, things that to-day would be extremely useful and necessary to the whole Order; but as he himself had a great fear of scandalizing anyone, he gave way against his will to the will of the brethren.<sup>1</sup> He often said: "Woe unto those brothers who are against me in what I clearly know to be God's will for the greatest benefit and necessity of the whole Order, even though I give way to them against my will!"

He also frequently said to us, his companions: "I am very grieved and afflicted that the knowledge I have, with much prayer and meditation, obtained from God in His mercy for the present and future good of the Order, and which He Himself has shown me to be according to His will, is rejected by some brothers. On the authority of their own science and wrongful prudence, they oppose me and say: 'This rule is to be honoured and observed and not this one!'"

<sup>1</sup> It is obvious that such passages as well as those in the ensuing chapter necessarily led to the prohibition of all the original legends, after Bonaventure had laid down the official policy in his *Legenda maior* (v. Angelo Clareno, *Hist.* 7, arch. II, p. 265).

## 47 (67)

Blessed Francis was much grieved when he saw virtue neglected for the sake of "knowledge that puffeth up", especially if a man did not adhere to his original vocation.<sup>1</sup> He used to say: "My brothers who are led by desire for knowledge will find their hands empty on the day of tribulation. Therefore I would have them grow stronger in virtue, so that, when the time of tribulation comes, they may have the Lord on their side in their great need. For when tribulation has come, the books, which are of no avail, will be thrown out of the windows, and cast into the corners."

He did not say this because the study of the Holy Scriptures displeased him, but so as to restrain them all from a superfluous addiction to study. (68). He wanted them to grow in charity rather than in learning and science. For he foresaw that the time was coming soon when the "knowledge that puffeth up" would lead to ruin.

## 48 (69)

The most holy father did not wish his brethren to be desirous of learning and books, instead he admonished them to acquire a firm grounding in holy humility and to imitate the pure simplicity, the prayerful devotion and the love of the Lady Poverty on which the first holy friars had founded the edifice of their lives; this, he said, was the only sure way to their own salvation and the edification of others. . . .

He did not despise sacred science, for indeed he had a great veneration for those learned men of the Order and for all scholars, as he himself testifies in his testament, with the words: "We must honour and venerate all theologians and those that minister to us with the word of God, because they impart to us the spirit and the life." The blessed father himself, seeing into the future, knew through the Holy Spirit and often said to the brethren that many friars missed the opportunity to edify others which is given to them by their vocation, namely holy humility, pure simplicity, prayer and devotion, and our Lady Poverty, and where they thought to

<sup>1</sup> That is to say that a man who entered the order without a higher education was not to set about acquiring it (v. Rule of 1223, chap. 10).

achieve the most, in inspiring devotion, inflaming love and awakening knowledge of God through knowledge of the Scriptures, there they would remain cold and empty. . . .

And he said: "There are many brothers who put all their zeal and solicitude into the acquiring of learning, dismissing their holy vocation . . . and when they preach to the people, and learn that they have edified some or converted them, they become puffed up and extol themselves, as though the gain were through their own merit . . . while they were only the instruments of those through whom God acquired these fruits. For those whom they thought to edify and convert to penitence through their learning and their preaching, God Himself converted through the prayers and tears of holy, poor, humble and simple brethren, those saintly brethren namely, who usually know nothing about it. For such is the will of God, that they should know nothing, so that they should not take pride in it.

"Those are my brothers, the knights of the Round Table, who live concealed in desert and remote places and give themselves up to prayer and meditation, weeping for their own sins and those of others, living simply and conversing humbly; their saintliness is known to God alone, and sometimes by a few brothers, but men know nothing about it. When the angel presents their souls to the Lord, then the Lord will show them the reward of their labours, namely many souls that have been saved by their prayers and their tears."

## 49 (70)

Once a novice who knew how to read, although not very well, received permission from the General Minister [probably Brother Elias in 1221] to have a psalter of his own. But because he had heard that Blessed Francis did not wish his brothers to desire learning and books, he was not content to have it without the express permission of Blessed Francis.

When Blessed Francis came to the place where this novice was, he said to him: "Father, it would be a great consolation to me to have a psalter; but although the General Minister has given me permission, I would only like to have it with your knowledge."

Thereupon Blessed Francis replied: "The Emperor Charlemagne,

Roland and Oliver and all the paladins and the strong men who were mighty in battle, persecuting the infidel with much sweat and labour unto death, are remembered for their victories. And the holy martyrs died in the lists for the faith of Christ. But to-day there are many who would reap honour and human praise merely for reciting their deeds. And likewise there are many among us who by merely reciting the deeds of the saints and preaching on them, hope to receive honour and praise." This was as though he had said: You should not care for books and learning, but for virtuous deeds, because "knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth".

After a few days, as Blessed Francis was sitting by the fire, the same novice spoke to him again about the psalter. And Blessed Francis said to him: "When you have a psalter, you will want and desire to have a breviary. And when you have a breviary, you will sit on a raised seat, like a great prelate, and say to your brothers: Bring me my breviary!"

And while he said this, Blessed Francis with great spiritual fervour took a handful of ashes and laid it on his head, and moving his hand round and round with the movement of a man washing his head, he said: "I am the breviary! I am the breviary!" And this he repeated many times, moving his hand round his head. And that friar was amazed and ashamed.

Then Blessed Francis said to him: "Brother, I was similarly tempted to possess books, but so as to know God's will in this matter, I took the book in which the Lord's Gospels are written and I prayed the Lord to show me His will at the first opening of the book. And when I had finished praying, at the first opening of the book I found these words: "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables" [Mark iv. 11]. And he said: "There are those who gladly rise to the knowledge that blessed is he who renders himself barren for the love of the Lord God."

A few months had elapsed when Blessed Francis was at St. Mary of Portiuncula, near his cell next to the house on the road, when the aforesaid friar spoke to him again about the psalter. And Blessed Francis said: "Go and do in this matter what your superior tells you to do." When he had heard this, the friar began to go back the same way he had come.

Blessed Francis, who had remained on the road, began to think over what he had said to the friar. And suddenly he began to call after him, saying: "Wait for me, brother, wait!" And he went after him and said: "Come back with me, brother, and show me the spot where I said to you that in the matter of the psalter, you should do what your superior tells you." When they arrived at the spot, Blessed Francis bent his knee before the friar and said: "Mea culpa, brother, my most grievous fault! For whoever wants to be a Brother Minor may have nothing except a tunic, as the rule prescribes, (71) a cord and a pair of breeches, and if a manifest necessity should arise, a pair of shoes. . . ." <sup>1</sup>

## 50 (72)

He used to say that the lukewarm, who would not apply themselves lovingly and humbly to any task, would soon be spewed out of the mouth of God. No one could appear before him in idleness without being corrected with asperity, and he, who was an example of all perfection, performed manual labour with great humility, never allowing the excellent gift of time to be wasted.

He was wont to say: "I want all my brethren to work and to exercise themselves humbly in good works, so that we should not be a burden to men, and that neither heart nor tongue should overreach themselves through idleness; and those who have not learnt to do any work should learn." The gain, however, and the payment for their work, was not to go to the workers, but to the guardians for the benefit of the community. <sup>2</sup>

## 51 (73)

Blessed Francis often said these words to his brethren: "I have never robbed people of alms, neither asking for them nor using them beyond my needs. I have always received less than my share,

<sup>1</sup> This anecdote reveals the inner struggles that were besetting the Saint. The dilemma in which he found himself, whether to remain silent out of humility or to forbid what was against his conscience, had not been solved when he divested himself of his authority—on the contrary, it assumed the proportions of a "temptation" and continued to exercise him for years.

<sup>2</sup> The importance of work as a duty (as apart from begging for alms, which should provide only the barest necessities) is stressed in both Rules (1st Rule, chap. 7, 2nd Rule, chap. 5).

so as not to defraud other beggars of their part, for to do otherwise would have been theft."

## 52 (74)

At the time when he was staying at St. Mary of Portiuncula, a poor old woman who had two sons in the Order came to the hermitage to beg alms from Blessed Francis. He immediately said to Brother Peter Cattaneo, who was then General Minister: "Can we not have something to give to our mother here?" For he used to say that the mother of any friar was his own mother and the mother of all the others. Brother Peter answered: "There is nothing in the house that we could give her, for she wants something with which to sustain her body. In the church we have only one New Testament from which we read the lessons at matins." For at that time the brethren had no breviaries and only a few psalters.

Then Blessed Francis said: "Give our mother the New Testament so that she can sell it for her needs. I believe firmly that this will please the Lord and the Blessed Virgin better than if we read in it." And so it was given to her. . . .

## 53 (75)

Another time a beggar came to the place where Blessed Francis was and asked the brethren for the love of God to give him a bit of cloth. Hearing this, Blessed Francis said to a friar: "Look round the house whether you can find some piece of cloth and give it to that beggar." The brother searched through the house and said he could find nothing. So as not to send the beggar away empty-handed, Blessed Francis went secretly, so that his guardian should not forbid him to do so, and took a knife; then sitting in a hidden place, he began to cut off a piece of his tunic which was sewn on inside, intending to give it secretly to the beggar. But the guardian noticed this, and going quickly to Blessed Francis he forbade him to give it away; chiefly because it was very cold and the holy father was ailing and felt the cold badly. Then Blessed Francis said: "If you do not want me to give him this piece, you must in any case procure some cloth for our poor brother." And

so his brethren gave the beggar some cloth from their habits at Blessed Francis's request.

## 54 (76)

When he was going through the town of Assisi, a poor old woman asked him to give her alms for the love of God, and at once he gave her the cloak he had on his back. Then, without delay, he confessed to those who followed him that he had been vainglorious about this.

We have seen and heard so many other examples of his utter humility, we who were his companions, that we cannot possibly relate them all, either by words or by letters. But more than about anything else, Blessed Francis was concerned never to be a hypocrite before God.

## 55 (77)

At a time [winter 1220-1221] when Blessed Francis had been very ill and was convalescing, it seemed to him that he had indulged himself too much during his sickness, although he had only eaten sparingly. One day he got up, although he was not yet free from the quartan ague, and had the people of Assisi called together in the square so that he could preach to them. When he had finished preaching, he told the people not to go away before he had come back to them, and went into the cathedral (78) of San Ruffino with many friars and Brother Peter Cattaneo, who was a canon of the said cathedral and was chosen as the first General Minister by Blessed Francis. The holy father then told Brother Peter to do what he would bid him by holy obedience, without contradicting. And Brother Peter replied: "Brother, I neither can nor may have a wish or perform an action for myself or for you which is not according to your desire."

Thereupon Blessed Francis took off his tunic and ordered Brother Peter to drag him thus naked, with a cord tied round his neck, before all the people to the place where he had preached. And he told another friar to bring a basin full of ashes and take it up to the place where he had preached, and when they got there, to throw it in his face. (79) But in this the friar would not obey him, for he was too deeply moved by pity and compassion for him. But Brother



Peter, taking the cord tied round Blessed Francis's neck, dragged him along as he had bidden him, although he wept bitterly all the while, and the other friars also shed abundant tears of grief and compassion.

When Blessed Francis had thus been led naked before all the people to the place where he had preached, he said: "You, and all those who, following my example, have abandoned the world and entered the religion and the life of the fraternity, believe that I am a holy man. But I confess to God and to you that during my sickness I have eaten meat (80) and meat-broth."

And nearly all who were there began to weep for him, out of pity and compassion, especially because it was wintry weather and the cold was very intense, and he was not yet free from the quartan ague. And they beat upon their breasts, accusing themselves, and said: "If this saint accuses himself so remorsefully for what was justified and necessary, he whose life we know to be saintly, who by the severe abstinence and austerity to which he has subjected his body since the beginning of his conversion to Christ, even in life appears already half dead—what shall we do, we wretches who have lived all our lives and continue to live according to the desires of our flesh?"

### 56 (81)

Another time [probably at the Chapter of 1221, when Brother Elias became Vicar General of the Order] he relinquished his companions to his Vicar<sup>1</sup> and said: "I do not want to appear to have an extraordinary position by the prerogative of having a special companion of my own, let the friars accompany me from place to place as God shall inspire them." And he said: "I have even seen a blind man who had no one to lead him around except a little dog, and I do not want to appear better than he."

For this was always his glory, to set aside all singularity and boastfulness, so that the virtue of Christ inhabited his soul.

<sup>1</sup> By the title "Vicar" or "Vicar General", i.e. deputy representing Blessed Francis, the impression was maintained that he was still the head of the Order. In fact he had no longer any rights, except those accorded him by the reverent affection of the friars, or delegated to him by the Chapter. So he was entrusted with a new formulation of the Rule, but the Chapter and the Cardinal Protector of the Order corrected it, and finally it was confirmed by the Pope. (The Saint accomplished this task between 1221 and 1223.)

## 57 (82)

When the ministers tried to persuade Blessed Francis to allow the friars to have some property, at least in common, so that such a great multitude might have something to fall back on, he prayed and called to Christ, consulting Him thereon. And the Lord at once answered him, saying: "I will remove all property, single and in common, for I will always be there to provide for this family, however much it may increase, and I will always favour it, as long as it trusts in Me."

## 58 (83)

Once a minister came to Blessed Francis to celebrate the feast of the Nativity of Our Lord with him at the hermitage of the brethren in Rieti. In honour of the minister and of the feast, the friars prepared the tables rather ceremoniously and carefully on that Christmas Day, laying beautiful white tablecloths and goblets of glass.

When Blessed Francis came down from his cell to dine, he saw the tables placed high up and thus carefully laid. He then went secretly and took the hat and stick of a beggar who had come on that day, and after speaking to one of his companions in an undertone, he went out by the door, unbeknown to the friars in the house. His companion remained inside the door, and in the meanwhile the friars went to table, for Blessed Francis had ordered that the brothers should never wait for him when he did not come in punctually at mealtimes.

After Blessed Francis had stood outside for a little time, he knocked on the door and his companion immediately opened it. Coming with his hat hanging on his back and the stick in his hand, he went to the door of the house in which the friars were dining, and like a wandering beggar he cried out, saying: "For the love of the Lord God give something to me, poor and infirm wanderer!" The minister and the other brethren immediately recognized him, but the minister answered: "Brother, we too are poor, and as there are many of us, we have need of the alms we have collected. But for the love of the Lord whom you named, come into the house and we will give you of the alms which the Lord has given us."

And as he came in and stood before the table of the brethren, the minister gave him the dish out of which he was eating, and also some bread. And Blessed Francis, accepting it, sat down humbly on the ground near the fire, in front of the brothers who were sitting at table. And sighing, he said to the friars: "When I saw the table ceremoniously and carefully prepared, I thought that this was not the table of poor religious who go to beg for alms from door to door. We, my dearest brothers, are more bound to follow the example of Christ's humility and poverty than other religious, for to this we have been called and professed before God and men. Therefore it seems to me that I am sitting as befits a Brother Minor, because the feasts of the Lord and of the saints are more honoured by need and poverty, for which the same saints have gained heaven, than by luxuries and superfluities which withdraw the soul from heaven."

Thereupon the brethren were ashamed, considering that he had spoken the pure truth. And some of them began to weep bitterly, seeing how Blessed Francis sat on the ground, correcting and instructing them in so saintly and seemly a manner. He admonished the brothers to prepare their tables in an humble and seemly fashion, so that people of the world would be edified, and that if a beggar should come or be invited by the brethren he might sit beside them as an equal, and not the poor man on the ground and the friars on a raised seat. (84)

## 59 (85)

Likewise one time when he was staying at a hermitage [Poggio Bustone near Rieti] during the Advent fast, (86) he ate some food prepared with lard, because, owing to his infirmities, oil was very harmful to him. At the end of Advent, as he was preaching to a great concourse of people, he began his sermon by saying: "You have come to me with great devotion, believing me to be a holy man, but I confess to God and to you that during this Lenten fast I have eaten food prepared with lard."

Almost invariably, when he had dined with laymen or when the brethren prepared some special dish for him because of his infirmities he would declare it at home and abroad, before the brethren and the laymen who did not know it, saying: "I have eaten such and such

a dish." He did not wish to hide from men what was manifest to God. Likewise, wherever and in the presence of whomever it happened that his spirit was moved by pride or vainglory or any vice, he would immediately confess it to them all, unveiling the stark truth without disguising it. Once he said to his companions: "I want to live in the hermitage and wherever I am as though all men could see me. If they believe me to be a holy man and I do not live the life that befits a holy man, then I am a hypocrite."

Therefore, when once during the cold weather one of his companions who was his guardian wanted, because of the infirmity Blessed Francis suffered from his spleen and stomach, to attach part of a foxhide under his tunic to cover his spleen and stomach, the holy father said: "If you want me to wear a fox-hide under my tunic, then you must make me wear a part of that skin on the outside of my tunic, so that all men can see that I also have the fox-fur inside." And thus he had it made, but he only wore it very rarely, though he had great need of it.

## 60 (87)

When Blessed Francis was preaching to the people of Terni (88) on the market square, the Bishop of that town, a man both discreet and spiritual, arose immediately after the sermon and said to the people: "The Lord, ever since He began to plant and raise His Church, has ever enlightened her by holy men, who helped to cultivate her by word and example; now at this eleventh hour she is being illuminated by this poor, despicable, illiterate man Francis. Therefore you must love and honour the Lord, and guard yourselves against sin, for He has not done the same for other nations!"

When he had said these words, the Bishop came down from the place where he had preached and went into the cathedral. Blessed Francis went to him there, bowed before him and prostrated himself at his feet, saying: "In truth I tell you, my Lord Bishop, that no man has ever done me such honour in this world as you did to-day. For other men say: 'This is a holy man', attributing glory and holiness to me and not to the Creator. But you so wisely did separate the precious from the vile."

Whenever Blessed Francis heard himself praised and called a saint, he would answer to these words by saying: "I am not at all sure that I shall not have sons and daughters; for, if the Lord should take from me His treasure, which He has lent me, what else would remain to me except a body and a soul, no different to that of the infidels: Indeed, I must believe that if the Lord had given as much grace to robbers or infidels as He did to me, they would serve Him more faithfully than I do."

## 61 (89)

While Blessed Francis was attending the general Chapter at St. Mary of Portiuncula which is called the Chapter of the Mats, because the five thousand friars who were there had no other shelter than rush mats, several wise and learned friars went to the Lord Cardinal of Ostia who was there (90) and said to him: "Lord, we would have you persuade Brother Francis to follow the advice of learned brethren and allow himself to be led by them." And they quoted the Rules of St. Benedict, St. Augustine and St. Bernard, which taught an orderly way of life.

All this was repeated by the Cardinal to Blessed Francis by way of admonition, and the holy father, without answering anything, took the Cardinal by the hand and led him to the brethren congregated in Chapter, and thus he spoke to the brethren in the fervour and virtue of the Holy Spirit: "My brothers, my brothers, God has called me by the way of simplicity and humility, and this way He has shown me in truth for me and for all those who want to believe me and follow me. And therefore I do not want you to mention any other Rule to me, neither that of St. Benedict, nor of St. Augustine, nor of St. Bernard, nor any other way or form of life except this way which has been shown and given me by God's mercy. (91) And the Lord said to me that He desired me to be a new simpleton in this world, and He will not lead us by any other way than by that science. But by your science and learning God will confound you. And I trust in the bailiffs of the Lord, that through them He will punish you, and then you will return willy-nilly and with much shame to your first state." At this the Cardinal was much surprised, and he said nothing, and all the brethren were greatly afraid.

62 (92)

*(Thomas of Spalato reports on a sermon he heard St. Francis deliver at Bologna in the summer of 1222)*

“On the day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin in that same year, while I was studying at Bologna, I saw Blessed Francis preaching on the square before nearly all the people of the town. The theme of his sermon was angels, men and devils, and he spoke so pregnantly and with such eloquence that many learned men who were there were filled with admiration that an unlettered man should discourse so well. With that he had none of the tricks of a preacher, rather he appeared to be conversing with friends. The moral of his sermon was that enmities must be eradicated, for the chief need was peace among men. His habit was poor, there was nothing imposing about his appearance, his face was not handsome—but God gave his words such power that they converted many of the nobles to peace and amity, though in their wild feuds they had not even stopped short of shedding blood. The people had such reverence for him that crowds of men and women followed him and every one was happy who succeeded in touching the hem of his garment.”

63 (93)

While Blessed Francis was preaching on the square in Perugia and a great crowd of people had congregated around him, suddenly some knights of Perugia began to ride across the square, holding a tournament, and impeding the sermon, and although those who were there bade them stop, they continued their tourneying.

Then Blessed Francis turned to them and said with great fervour of spirit: “Listen and understand what the Lord, through me, His small servant, makes known to you, and do not say ‘but this is an Assisian!’ ” (This he said because there was and still is, an ancient hatred between the Perugians and the Assisians.)

And he said to them: “The Lord has exalted you over all your neighbours, and therefore you should honour your Creator all the more and humiliate yourselves, not only before God Himself, but also before your neighbours. But your heart is uplifted in pride and

you despoil your neighbours' lands and you have slaughtered many of them. Therefore I say to you that unless you soon turn back to God and make amends to those whom you have offended, the Lord, who leaves nothing unpunished, will make you arise one against the other to avenge them and to your greater punishment and shame; and when sedition and civil war rages among you, you will suffer worse tribulations than your neighbours could ever inflict on you."

Thus namely Blessed Francis was never silent on the vices of the people when he preached, but argued everything openly and with manly courage. But the Lord had given him so much grace that all those who saw and heard him, whatever their state and condition, so feared and venerated him for the abundant grace God had given him that, however frankly he reprimanded them, they were always edified by his words and were either converted to the Lord or pierced inwardly by remorse.

And it happened by divine permission that after a few days a scandal broke out between the knights and the people, and the people drove the knights out of the city. And the knights, with the ecclesiastical authorities who aided them, devastated the fields and vineyards and orchards of the citizens and did them as much harm as they could. And the citizens likewise devastated all the property of the knights, and so, according to the words of St. Francis, the people and the knights were punished.(94)

#### 64 (95)

... It is known that Blessed Francis made three Rules, namely the one which was confirmed by Pope Innocent without a bull [1210]. Later he made another shorter one, which was lost,(96) and then [1222-1223] the one which Pope Honorius confirmed with a bull; many parts of this Rule were removed by the ministers against the will of Blessed Francis.(97)

After the second Rule which Blessed Francis had made was lost, he went on to a mountain [Monte Colombo near Rieti] with Brother Bonizio of Bologna to make another Rule, which he caused to be written down following the instruction of Christ.

At the same time several ministers were congregated with Brother Elias, who was Blessed Francis's Vicar, and they said to him: "We

hear that Brother Francis is making a new Rule, and we fear that he will make it so harsh that we cannot keep it. We want you to go and tell him that we do not wish to be bound by that Rule. Let him make it for himself, but not for us."

Brother Elias answered them that he did not want to go, fearing a reproof from Blessed Francis. But as they insisted, he told them he would not go without them, and so they all went together. When Brother Elias came to the place where Blessed Francis was, he called out to him. And Blessed Francis answered him, and seeing the aforesaid ministers, he said: "What do these brothers want?"

And Brother Elias said: "These are ministers who have heard that you are making a new Rule, and fearing that you will make it too harsh, they say and protest that they do not desire to be bound by it; you are to make it for yourself and not for them."

Thereupon Blessed Francis turned his face to heaven and spoke with Christ, saying: "Lord, did I not speak right of Thee that they will not believe me?"

Then they all heard the voice of Christ answering in the air: "Francis, there is nothing in this Rule that is yours, the whole is Mine as it stands; and I will that the Rule be obeyed to the letter, to the letter, to the letter, without a gloss, without a gloss, without a gloss." And He added: "I know what human infirmity is capable of and how much I will help them. Let those who do not want to obey that Rule retire from the Order."

Then Blessed Francis turned to those brethren and said to them: "Did you hear? Did you hear? Do you want me to have it said to you again?" Thereupon the ministers went away confused and terrified, accusing themselves.

... Although the ministers knew that according to the Rule the friars were held to follow the Holy Gospel, they nevertheless caused the chapter of the Rule to be deleted which says "You are to take nothing on your way" (99) believing that they need not observe the perfection of the Gospels in that matter. Therefore, when Blessed Francis knew this through the Holy Spirit, he said before those friars: "The brothers' ministers think they are deceiving God and



myself. But so that all brethren should know that they are bound to observe the perfection of the Holy Gospels, I want it to be written at the beginning and at the end of the Rule that the brethren must observe firmly the Gospels of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so that there should be no excuse for the brethren, seeing that I have announced to them, and announce again, the words the Lord has placed in my mouth for their and my salvation, I will illustrate them by my own actions before God, and with His help observe them in "perpetuity."

## 66 (100)

Owing to the great zeal he always had for the perfection of the Order, it was natural that he grieved when he heard or saw some imperfection concerning it, beginning to understand that some friars gave a bad example to the community, and that others who had already reached the summit of their profession were beginning to decline; his heart was filled with great sorrow and he prayed and said to the Lord: "Lord, I recommend to thee the family thou hast given me."

And at once the Lord answered him thus: "Tell me, you simple and ignorant little man, why do you grieve so when a friar leaves the Order and the brethren do not follow the way I showed you? Tell me then who has founded this community of friars? Who converts men to penitence? Who gives them the virtue to persevere in it? Is it not I? . . . And so that you should know that I favour the life and the observance of the brethren, I tell you that if there were only three friars in all it would still be my family and I will not forsake it in all eternity."

And hearing these words, his soul was marvellously comforted. . . . And he thought . . . "Since I have laid down my office with the brethren because of my infirmities and for other rational causes, all I can do is to pray for the Order and show the brethren a good example."

## 67 (101)

(In June 1223 Brother Cesar of Speyer, "a learned master of holy theology" returned from a mission in Germany, and after a long conversation with the Saint, he asked: )

“One favour I beg of you: should it happen in my day that the brethren should fall away in anything from the pure observation of the Rule . . . that you permit me to retire alone or with some other brethren, so as to save its perfection.”

Hearing this, Blessed Francis was overjoyed, blessed him and said: “Know that the permission you crave is granted you by Christ and by me.” And laying his right hand on the brother’s head, he added: “You are a priest in eternity according to the order of Melchisedech.”

68 (102)

*(A letter written at about that time by Blessed Francis to Brother Leo.)*

“Brother Leo, Brother Francis wishes you salvation and peace. I tell you, my dear son, speaking to you as your mother, that all the words we have spoken on our way will I briefly condense in this word of advice, and if you should come to me for advice later this is what I counsel you: In whichever manner you see the best way of pleasing the Lord God and following His footsteps and His poverty, that you shall do with the blessing of the Lord God and under obedience to me. And if it should be necessary for your soul’s sake or for another reason that you should come to me, and you desire to do so, then, Leo, come!”

69 (103)

*(In autumn 1223, after taking counsel with Cardinal Ugolino, St. Francis went to Rome to obtain the papal confirmation of his Rule.)*

When the Sovereign Pontiff had carefully examined all that the Rule contained, he said to Blessed Francis: “Blessed is he who by the power of grace can follow this rule happily and devoutly, for all that it contains is godly, catholic and perfect. But these words ‘The brethren must and may have recourse to their ministers, who are bound by holy obedience to grant what they ask (the literal observance of the rule of poverty). And should the ministers refuse, the brethren have the licence in holy obedience to observe these

things literally,<sup>1</sup> for all superiors and inferiors must be subject to the Rule—these words might occasion the ruin of such brethren who are not well grounded in the love of virtue, and give rise to disaffection and scandal within the Order. Therefore I wish these words to be altered so that all danger and cause for division be taken from the brethren and the Order.”

Blessed Francis replied: “Not I have put these words into the Rule, but Christ, who knows best what is useful and necessary for the bodies and souls of the brethren and the good state and conservation of the Order. . . . I neither may nor can change the words of Christ. . . .” Then the Pope said: “I will see to it that the spirit of the words is observed, but I will moderate the text of that passage of the Rule, so that the ministers understand that they are obliged to do what Christ wills and the Rule lays down, and the brethren that they are free to observe the Rule in its pure simplicity. . . .”

Thus the Pope altered the words of the said clause to those now in the Rule.

#### 70 (104)

*(When St. Francis was in Rome at the end of the year 1223, the Cardinal Leo of S. Croce had invited him to stay with him and assigned a remote tower to him, where he could live as in a hermitage. St. Francis went there with his companion.)*

When Blessed Francis had gone there with his companion, in the first night, as he wanted to go to sleep, the demons came and troubled him sorely with great blows. And calling his companion, he said to him: “Brother, the demons are assailing me with great blows, and I want you to stay with me, for I am afraid to stay here alone.” And that night his companion stayed near him, and Blessed Francis trembled all over, like a man in a fever, and they both stayed awake all night.

Blessed Francis said to his companion: “Why are the demons beating me, and why has this power to trouble me been given them

<sup>1</sup> The present text, which no longer expresses what the Saint desired, runs as follows: “And wherever there be brethren who know and recognize that they are incapable of the spiritual observance of the Rule, they may and shall have recourse to the ministers. The minister must receive them with charity and kindness and be so familiar with them that the friars can speak and act towards them as a master with his trusted servants. For the ministers must be the servants of all the brethren” (chapter x).

by the Lord?" And he said: "The demons are the bailiffs<sup>1</sup> of our Lord; as He gives His bailiffs power to punish the sinners, even so by His bailiffs—namely the demons, who are His ministers in this—He corrects and chastises those whom He loves . . . those whom God cherishes with tender love He never allows to go unpunished in this life. Truly, by the mercy and grace of God, I do not know in what I have offended without having confessed and repented; also, by His great mercy, God has given me the grace to receive a clear comprehension of what pleases and displeases Him in prayer. But it is possible that He is now chastising me through His bailiffs because, while the Lord Cardinal is giving me his hospitality and my body is accepting this refreshment, my brothers who go through the world suffering hunger and many tribulations, and other brothers who dwell in hermitages and wretched huts, when they hear that I am staying with the Lord Cardinal, might have occasion to murmur against me, saying: 'We endure so much adversity and he is living in luxury!' Therefore I am bound always to give them a good example, for that is the reason why I was given to them; therefore it edifies the brothers more if I stay in poor places, and they bear their tribulations more patiently when they hear that I endure the same. . . ."

So Blessed Francis came down from the tower early next morning and went to the Lord Cardinal and related to him all that had happened to him and what he had gone through with his companion. And he said: "Men believe me to be a holy man, and see, the devils throw me out of the tower!" And the Lord Cardinal was greatly pleased with him. . . .

## 71 (105)

Although he had been afflicted for many years by the aforesaid ailments (stomach, spleen and liver, besides an affliction of the eyes), he was so devout and reverent at prayer and divine office that he never leaned against a wall while he was praying or saying the canonical hours, but always stood erect with his head bare, though he sometimes knelt, especially when he spent the greater part of the day and night in prayer. When he was wandering through the country on foot, he always stopped when he wanted to say his

<sup>1</sup> *castaldi, castalli, gastaldi.*

hours, and when he had to ride because of his infirmities, he always dismounted to say the office.

Once [on his return from staying with Cardinal Leo in Rome] it rained very hard and for that reason and because of his infirmities he was riding. And although he was already wet through, he dismounted from his horse when he wanted to say his hours and prayed with such fervour of devotion and reverence, standing there on the road with the rain beating down on him, as though he were in church or in his cell. And he said to his companion: "If the body can eat its food in peace and quietness, although it will assuredly be food for the worms, with how much greater peace and quietness, with what devotion and reverence, must the soul take its nourishment, which is God Himself."

## 72 (106)

*Manuscript note of Brother Leo in a breviary kept as a relic  
in the church of St. Clare at Assisi.*

Blessed Francis acquired this breviary for his companions Brother Angelo and Brother Leo, and in the days of his health he always wanted to say the office, as the Rule prescribes. And in the time of his sickness, when he could say it no longer, he wanted to hear it. And this continued as long as he lived. He also had the gospels written down, so that on the days when he could not hear Mass, either because of ill-health or some other manifest impediment, he could have the gospel of the day read out to him which was read at Mass in church; and this continued until his demise. He used to say: "When I do not hear Mass, I adore the Body of Christ with the eyes of my spirit in prayer as I adore it when I look upon it in church." When he had heard or read the gospel, Blessed Francis would always kiss the book with great reverence.

## 73 (107)

In wintertime, near Celano, it happened that Blessed Francis was wearing a folded cloth like a cloak, which a friend of the brethren had arranged for him, and he met an old woman begging for alms. At once he unwound the cloth from his neck and, although he did

not know her, he gave it to the poor old woman, saying: "Go and make a gown for yourself of this, for you need one badly!"

The old woman laughed in her amazement, half rejoicing, half afraid, and after taking the cloth from his hands she ran away as fast as she could for fear he might think better of it, and cut out the cloth with scissors. Then she saw that the cloth was not enough to make a gown, and she returned, having recourse once more to the charity of the holy father, and telling him that the cloth was not sufficient for a gown. Blessed Francis turned his saintly eyes to his companion, who was wearing a similar cloth on his back, and said to him: "Did you hear what the poor little soul said? Let us endure the cold for the love of God, and give the poor woman that cloth, so that she can complete her gown."

## 74 (108)

We who were with Blessed Francis and have written these things, bear witness that we have often heard him say: "If I could speak to the Emperor, I would beg him and persuade him, for the love of God and for my sake, to make a special law forbidding anyone to catch our sisters the larks and kill them, or do them any harm. Likewise all civic authorities and the lords of fortresses and villages should be asked every year, on the day of the Nativity of Our Lord, to compel the people to scatter corn and other grains on the roads outside the towns and castles, so that our sisters the larks and the other birds should have enough to eat on that most solemn festival; and that, out of reverence for the Son of God, who on that night was laid in the manger by the Blessed Virgin Mary between an ox and an ass, whoever has an ox and an ass, should provide them with a good feed on that night."

## THE SAINT'S GREAT SUFFERINGS (1224-1226)

## 75 (109)

While he was staying at the hermitage of St. Mary a grave temptation of the spirit was sent to him for the good of his soul. He was so much afflicted by this in body and soul that he often withdrew from the company of his brethren, because he could not

be gay when he was with them, as he usually appeared. . . . After he had been thus afflicted for more than two years, it happened that while he was praying in the church of St. Mary he heard in his spirit these words of the Gospel: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove from hence to yonder place; and it shall remove" [Matt. xvii. 19].

At once Blessed Francis answered: "Lord, what is this mountain?" And it was said to him: "That mountain is your temptation." Then Blessed Francis said: "Then, O Lord, do to me as Thou hast said." And suddenly he was so perfectly relieved that it seemed to him that he had never known any temptation at all.

Similarly on the sacred mountain of Alverna, at the time when he received the stigmata of the Lord on his body [summer 1224], he was subjected to such temptations and tribulations by the demons that he could not bear himself in his accustomed manner. He said to his companion: "If the brothers knew how often and how sorely the devils afflict and vex me, there would not be one among them who was not moved to compassion and pity towards me."<sup>1</sup>

## 76 (III)

Two years before his death, (112) when Blessed Francis was staying in San Damiano (in the garden of the convent of the Poor Ladies) in a cell covered with rush-mats, he was so greatly afflicted by the infirmity of his eyes that for more than fifty days he could not bear the light of day or even the light of a fire. It also happened by divine permission that, to increase his afflictions and his merit, so many mice came into his cell, running around and over him at night, that they allowed him neither to pray nor to rest. When he was eating, they would climb up onto the table and worry him so that he and his companions recognized that this was a manifest diabolical temptation.

One night Blessed Francis, seeing himself thus sorely tried, was moved by self-pity and said: "Lord, come to my aid in my afflictions,

<sup>1</sup> The temptations on both these occasions obviously were concerned with the observance of strict poverty; the Saint believed that Christ Himself had revealed this rule to him, and he did not know whether he was justified in relinquishing it, not for himself, but for the Order, as the majority of the ministers, the Vicar General Brother Elias, Cardinal Ugolino and the Pope desired and even demanded. (110) It is self-evident that the Saint's illness was connected with his spiritual struggles.

that I may endure them patiently!" And at once he was told in the spirit: "Tell me, brother, if someone were to give you a great and precious treasure for these your infirmities and tribulations, a treasure so great that if the whole earth were pure gold, all the rocks precious stones and all the water balm, you would hold them as naught in comparison, would you not rejoice?" And Blessed Francis replied: "Great must be, O Lord, this treasure and most precious, very amiable and desirable." And he heard in his spirit the words: "Well then, brother, rejoice and jubilate in your infirmities and tribulations, for through them you are as safe as though you were already in My kingdom. . . ." And the next day . . . he said to his companions: ". . . I must rejoice greatly in my infirmities and tribulations, and be comforted in the Lord, and ever give thanks to God the Father and His only Son the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, for the great grace given me by the Lord, that He has deigned while I am still in the flesh to assure me, His unworthy servant, of entering His kingdom. . . ." And sitting there, he began to meditate a while. And later he said: "*Altissimo, omnipotente, bon Signore . . . etc.,*" and he made a canticle about it, and taught his companions to say it and to sing it to him.

For now his spirit was so full of sweetness and consolation that he wanted to send for Brother Pacifico, who had been called the King of Verse in the world and was a master of courtly song, and he wanted to give him some good and spiritual friars, so that they might go with him through the world, preaching and singing the praises of the Lord. He said that he wanted the best preacher among them to begin by preaching to the people, and after the sermon they should all together sing the praises of the Lord, as minstrels of God. And when they had finished singing, the preacher was to say to the people: "We are minstrels of the Lord, and we ask that you reward us by remaining truly penitent." And he said: "What else are the servants of God but His minstrels, who should uplift the hearts of men and move them to spiritual joy?" And this he said especially of the Brothers Minor, who are given by God to the people for its salvation.

(Thus he composed the praises of the creatures, which he called the Canticle of Brother Sun.)



## 77 (113)

So fervent was the love and compassion of Blessed Francis for the suffering and the Passion of Christ, and so deeply did he grieve each day, inwardly and outwardly, for this Passion, that he no longer cared about his own infirmities. So for a long time until the day of his death he was afflicted by ailments of the stomach, the spleen and the liver, and from the time of his return from beyond the sea<sup>1</sup> he continually suffered great pain in his eyes, but he did not want to pay any attention to it or do anything to have it cured.

Therefore the Lord Bishop of Ostia, seeing how hard he was towards his own body and chiefly how he was already beginning to lose his eyesight because he did nothing towards having it cured, admonished him with great pity and compassion, saying: "Brother, it is not good that you do not let yourself be cured, for your life and your health are very necessary to the brethren and the laymen and to the whole of the Church. You have always pitied your brethren in their infirmities, treating them with tenderness and compassion, so you must not be cruel to yourself in your great need. Therefore I order you to have yourself cured and helped."

## 78 (114)

When the time had come for Blessed Francis to undergo a cure for his eyes, he took leave of the brethren. His infirmity was very severe. He wore a large hood, which the brethren had made for him, over his head, his eyes were covered with a bandage of linen and a woollen cloth under the hood, for he could not bear the pain the daylight caused his eyes. The brethren took him in a horse-drawn cart to the hermitage of Fonte Colombo near Rieti [in late autumn, 1225] so that he could consult a physician of Rieti who was especially skilful concerning ailments of the eyes.

This physician, after examining the infirmity, told Blessed Francis that he wished to cauterize his temple down to the brow of the eye which was most afflicted with a red-hot iron. But Blessed Francis did not want the cure to begin until Brother Elias arrived, as the

<sup>1</sup> Delorme reads "Egypt" instead of "beyond the sea"; this points to the possibility that St. Francis caught the infection of trachoma during his stay in Damietta.

latter had said he wanted to be there when the physician began the treatment. After waiting for Brother Elias, who did not come because many matters impeded him, and hesitating whether to begin the cure without him, Blessed Francis finally agreed to let the physician have his way, as he felt himself bound by holy obedience towards the Lord Cardinal of Ostia and the Minister General. But as he had a great aversion to wasting so much solicitude on himself, he would have preferred to leave the whole matter in the hands of the Minister General.

79 (115)

As he could not sleep because of his infirmities, and saw that his brethren were much distracted and tormented by this . . . he said to them with pity and compassion: "My dearest brothers, my little sons, let it not weigh on you to labour because of my infirmity; for the Lord will repay for me, His lowly servant, restituting to you the fruits of all your labour in this world and in the next, and by the things you must leave undone in order to care for me in my infirmity, you will acquire more merit than if you worked for yourselves, for he who helps me helps the whole Order and the life of the brethren. Therefore you shall say to me: 'On you we will expend ourselves, and the Lord shall be our debtor for you.'"

So the holy father spoke, wishing to help and cheer their faint hearts, because of his great zeal for the good of their souls, fearing lest some of them, because of the trouble he gave them, might be tempted to say: "We cannot even pray when there is so much work!" and becoming tired and impatient, lose the merit they had gained by their labours.

80 (116)

When Blessed Francis stayed at the hermitage of Fonte Colombo near Rieti, the eye-doctor came to visit him every day because of the infirmity of his eyes. After he had been there for some time and already wanted to take his leave, Blessed Francis said to one of his companions: "Go and give the doctor a really good meal." His companion answered: "Father, it shames me to have to say that we are so poor at present that we would be ashamed to ask the physician to dine with us."

Blessed Francis said to his companions: "O you of little faith, do not make me say more!" And the physician said to Blessed Francis: "Brother, for the very reason that the brethren are so poor I shall be all the more happy to eat with them." For that physician was very wealthy, and though Blessed Francis and the companions had often invited him, he had never wanted to accept.

So the brethren went and prepared the table, and with shame they placed on it a little bread and wine and the dish of cabbage they had prepared for themselves. And when they had sat down at the frugal board and begun to eat, there was a knock at the door; one of the friars rose and opened it, and there stood a woman carrying a large basket full of fine bread and fish and crayfish pastries and honey and fresh grapes, sent by the lady of a castle which was about seven miles from the hermitage.

Seeing this, the friars and the physician were amazed and greatly pleased, considering the saintliness of Blessed Francis and ascribing it all to his merits. And the physician said to the brethren: "My brothers, none of us, not even you, realize the sanctity of this man!"

### 81 (117)

The physician put the iron into the fire in order to heat it for the cauterization. And while the iron was being heated, Blessed Francis, desiring to comfort his own spirit lest it shrink, spoke these words to the fire: "My Brother Fire, noble and useful among all that is created, be courteous to me now, for I have always loved you and shall continue to do so for the sake of Him who created you. I pray our Creator, who made you, to temper your heat now, so that I can endure it." And when he had said this, he made the sign of the cross over the fire.

We who were with him were so moved by pity and compassion for him that we all fled, and only the physician remained with him. When the cauterization had been done, we returned to him and he said: "Faint-hearted ones, men of little faith, why did you run away? In truth I tell you that I felt no pain whatever and no heat from the fire. And if it is not well cauterized, let him cauterize again."

And the physician was greatly amazed, and said: "My brothers, I tell you that I am afraid to apply so strong a cauterization not only

to him who is weak and ill, but to the strongest man; but he did not move nor give the slightest indication of suffering."

The iron had gone into all the veins from the ear to the eyebrow, and yet it did not help him. Similarly another physician perforated both his ears with a glowing iron, and that, too, was of no avail.

It is no wonder that fire and other created things obeyed him and venerated him, for we, who were with him, often saw how much he loved them and delighted in them, and he had such pity and compassion for them that he would never allow them to be treated unkindly. And he would talk to them with such inward and outward delight as though they were rational beings, and often on such occasions he would be rapt up in ecstasy.

82 (118)

Of all inferior and insensible created things he cherished fire most, because of its beauty and usefulness. For this reason he desired that the flames should never be disturbed in their business.

So it once happened, as Blessed Francis was sitting beside the hearth, that without his knowledge his linen garment or drawers caught fire just under the knee, and although he felt the heat, he did not want to extinguish the fire. His companion, seeing that his clothes were burning, ran to him to put them out, but Blessed Francis restrained him, saying: "Don't, dearest brother, don't hurt Brother Fire!" And he did not want the fire to be extinguished.

His companion went as fast as he could to the friar who was the saint's guardian, and took him to Blessed Francis. And the guardian, against Blessed Francis's will, put out the fire. For, however urgent the necessity, he never wanted a flame to be extinguished, be it that of a lamp or of a candle, so dearly did he cherish it.

83 (119)

A poor woman had come from Machilone to Rieti because of an infirmity of her eyes. When the physician came to visit Blessed Francis, he said to him: "Brother, a woman suffering with her eyes has come to me, and she is so poor that I will have to pay her expenses."

Hearing this, the Saint was moved by pity for the poor woman, and, calling one of the friars who was his guardian, he said to him: "Brother Guardian, we have to pay back a loan." The friar asked: "What is this loan, Brother?" And Blessed Francis answered: "This cape, which we have borrowed from that poor infirm woman, we must give it back to her!" And his guardian said: "Brother, do as you think best."

Then Blessed Francis with hilarity called a spiritual man who was one of his familiars, and said to him: "Take this cloak and a dozen loaves and go to that poor woman suffering from an infirmity of the eyes whom the physician will show you, and say to her: 'The poor man to whom you lent this cloak thanks you for the loan; take what is yours.'"

The man went and repeated to the woman what Blessed Francis had told him to say. She, thinking they were making a jest of her, said with fear and shame: "Leave me in peace, I do not even know what you are talking about." But he laid the cloak and the twelve loaves into her hands. The woman saw that he was speaking in earnest and accepted the gifts with fear and reverence, rejoicing and praising the Lord. And fearing that they might be taken away from her again, she arose in the dead of night and went back to her home very happily. Blessed Francis had arranged with the guardian that he should give her her expenses for every day she stayed there.

84 (120)

While Blessed Francis was staying near Siena [at the beginning of the year 1226] a doctor of holy theology of the Order of Preachers [Dominicans], a humble and very spiritual man, came to see him. After he had discoursed for some time with Blessed Francis about the word of God, the said master questioned him about the words of Ezechiel: "... if thou speakest not to warn the wicked from his wicked way ... his soul will I require from thine hand" [Ezech. iii. 18]. And the theologian said: "There are many, good father, whom I know to be in mortal sin, but whom I do not warn from their wicked way; will then their souls be required from my hand?"

Thereupon Blessed Francis humbly said that he was an ignorant man, and that it would be more fitting for his companion to instruct

him than for him to expound the scriptures. But the humble master retorted: "Brother, although I have already heard several learned men expound this passage, I would so much rather know how you understand it." Then Blessed Francis said: "If we are to understand it in a general way, I understand it thus that the servant of God must so glow and shine by his own saintly life that the light of his example and his holy conversation should be a rebuke to all the ungodly. In this way, I say, the splendour of his life and the sweet odour of his reputation will warn all wicked men from their wicked way."

That doctor of theology was highly edified, and when he took his leave he said to Blessed Francis's companions: "My brothers, this man's theology is founded on purity and contemplation and is like the flight of an eagle; truly, in comparison all our learning crawls on its belly over the earth."

## 85 (121)

At the time when Blessed Francis was staying near Siena because of the infirmity of his eyes, the Lord Bonaventure, who had given the brethren the plot on which to build their house, said to him: "What do you hold of this place, Father?" And Blessed Francis said to him: "Do you want me to tell you how the brethren should build a house?" He answered: "Yes, tell me, Father." And Blessed Francis said: "When the brethren go to a city where they have no house, and they find someone who will give them enough ground for them to build a house and have a garden and all they need, they must first consider how much ground is sufficient, in accordance with the rule of holy poverty and the good example we are bound to give to all men."

This he said because it was quite against his wishes that the brethren should use either houses or churches, gardens or any other things which exceeded the measure of poverty, or that they should possess proprietary rights over any place, instead of conducting themselves as wanderers and strangers. For this reason he did not want the brethren to dwell together anywhere in large numbers, as he felt that it was difficult for large numbers to observe poverty. . . .

"When the brethren have the ground which they need for their house (he continued), they should go to the Bishop of that diocese

and say to him: 'Lord, such and such a man wants to give us so and so much ground, for the love of God and the salvation of his soul, that we can build a house there. Therefore we first have recourse to you, who are the father and lord of the souls of your flock, and of ours as well, and of all brethren who shall dwell in this place; so we will build with God's blessing and yours. . . .'

And he said: "The Lord has called us to support the faith and the prelates and clerics of Holy Church. Therefore we are bound, as much as we can, ever to cherish, honour and venerate them. . . . Then, when they have received the blessing of the Bishop, let them mark the circumference of the plot of ground they have received by having charcoal put down all around it,<sup>1</sup> and then planting a hedge in the place of a wall as a sign of holy poverty and humility. Then let them have poor huts made of mud and wattle and some cells, in which the brethren can pray at times and work honestly so as not to fall into idleness. They should make their churches small, and they should not build large churches in order to preach to the people or for any other reason, for it is more humble and gives a better example if we go to preach in other churches."

## 86 (122)

Some friars said to Blessed Francis: "Father, do you not see that the Bishops sometimes will not allow us to preach, and make us stay idle at a place for several days before we can proclaim the word of God? It would be better if we could obtain a privilege concerning this from the Lord Pope, and it would be conducive to the salvation of souls."

Whereupon he answered with a severe reproof, saying: "You would be Brothers Minor! And you do not recognize God's will and refuse to let me convert the whole world, as God wills it; for first of all I want to convert the prelates by holy humility and reverence. Then, when they see our saintly life and our humble reverence towards them, they will beg you to preach and convert the people, and they will call them to hear you preach, far better than your privileges, which will only lead you to become arrogant."

<sup>1</sup> or: by burning down a strip around it, "*faciant mitti magnam carbonariam*" (Spec.), "*carbonatium*" (Og. Nord), "*carbanatam vel carbanariam*" (Kruitwagen).

## 87 (123)

One time, when he had to vomit because of the infirmity of his stomach, he did himself such violence that he brought up blood all night long until the morning. When his companions found him so exhausted and weak that he seemed on the point of death, they said to him in great sorrow and with abundant tears: "Father, what shall we do without you? To whom will you leave us poor orphans? You have always been father and mother to us. . . . Now leave us a memorial of your will, so that your brethren may always remember it and can say: Our father left these words to his brothers and sons at his death."

Then the blessed father, turning his loving eyes towards his sons, spoke these words: "Call Brother Benedict of Piratro to me." This brother was a saintly and discreet priest, who sometimes celebrated Mass for Blessed Francis on his sick-bed, because he always desired to hear Mass whenever possible, even when he was sick.

When he had come to him, he said: "Write that I give my blessings to all my brethren who are in the Order, and those who are still to come until the end of time. And because, owing to my weakness and the pain of my infirmity, I am not able to speak, I will in these three words reveal my will and intentions to all present and future brothers. Namely, that in memory of me, of my blessing and my testament, they shall cherish each other as I love and cherish them; they shall always cherish and maintain our Lady Poverty and always remain faithful and obedient to the prelates and clerics of Holy Mother Church." (124)

## 88 (125)

Once Blessed Francis called together many friars and said to them: "I have prayed the Lord to show me when I am His true servant, and when I am not. For I do not desire to live unless as His servant. And the most merciful Lord has deigned to answer me thus: 'You can know yourself to be My true servant when your thoughts, your speech and your acts are holy.' Therefore have I called you, my brothers, have told you this, that I may be ashamed before your eyes when you see me deficient in all the things I have mentioned."



## 89 (126)

Once, when he was returning from Siena, he met a beggar and said to his companion: "We must give back to the poor little man the cape that belongs to him, for we have only received it as a loan until we meet someone who is poorer than we."

His companion, however, considering the good father's need, contradicted him with pertinacity, saying he must not provide for others and neglect himself. Thereupon the Saint said: "I refuse to be a robber, for we could be accused of robbery if we did not give to him who is in greater need." And so the good father gave his cloak to the beggar.

## 90 (127)

When he was at Cella di Cortona, Blessed Francis wore a new cloak, which the brethren had carefully provided for him. A beggar came to the hermitage, crying that his wife had died and his family was left in dire poverty.

The Saint, moved by compassion, said to him: "I will give you this cloak, provided you do not part with it unless someone pays you well." Hearing this, the friars hastened to the beggar to take the cloak away from him. But he, emboldened by the expression of the holy father, resisted with both hands, protecting it as his own. In the end the brethren redeemed the cloak, paying the beggar a good price for it.

## 91 (128)

Brother Riccieri of the March, of noble descent, but nobler still by his sanctity, who was much beloved by Blessed Francis, one day visited the good father at the episcopal palace of Assisi [where he was lying ill—summer 1226—] and among other matters concerning the Order and the observance of the Rule which he discussed with him, he questioned him especially on one subject, saying: "Tell me, Father, what was your intention when you first began to have brethren, and what is it now and what will it be to the day of your death? For I want to be able to bear witness of your first and last intention and will. May we, the friars who are clerics and possess many books, retain them if we say that they belong to the Order?"

Blessed Francis said to him: "I tell you, Brother, that this was and is my first and last intention and will, if the brethren would but believe me, that no friar should have any possessions except his habit, as the Rule prescribes, with a cord and a pair of drawers."

But perhaps some friar might say: why did Blessed Francis not insist in his time that the rule of poverty be as strictly observed as he said to Brother Riccieri, and why did he not command its observance? In that case we who were with him answer that we have heard it from his own lips, when he said it to the brethren as well as other similar things; and he even had set down in the Rule what he had been shown by the Lord in earnest prayer and meditation for the good of the Order, affirming that it was wholly according to God's will. But when he showed these things to the brethren, they seemed to them heavy and grievous. . . . And because he greatly feared to scandalize the brethren or himself he did not wish to contend with them, but gave way unwillingly to their wishes, asking God to forgive him. But, so that the words that God had laid into his mouth for the good of the brethren should not have been spoken in vain, he wanted to fulfil them in himself, so that he might have his reward from the Lord. And in the end this calmed him and consoled his spirit.

## 92 (129)

When a friar once asked him why he had thus ceased to direct his brothers, relinquishing them into alien hands as though they had ceased to be any concern of his, he answered: "My son, I love my brothers as best I can, though if they were to follow in my footsteps I would love them even more and would not alienate myself from them. Now there are those among the prelates who draw them towards other things, showing them the examples of ancient Rules and despising my counsels, but what they are now doing and the manner in which they do it will be clearly revealed in the end."

And a little later, when his infirmity had become much worse, he was vehemently moved in spirit and raised himself up in his bed, crying out: "Who are they who have wrested my Order and my brethren out of my hands? If I come to the next Chapter, I will show them wherein my will consists!"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No further Chapter took place in his life-time.

One of Blessed Francis's companions once said to him: "Father, forgive me, but I want to say something to you which several of us have already discussed. You know how in times gone by the entire Order strove to attain the purity of perfection, how all the brethren with great fervour and solicitude observed the rule of holy poverty in everything . . . and how they were unanimous in loving God and our neighbours, like truly apostolic and evangelical men.

"But now, since some little time, this purity and perfection has begun to diminish, and some say that this is because such a great multitude of friars cannot observe it. But many of the brethren are so stricken with blindness . . . that it would seem they despised the way of holy simplicity and poverty and set it at naught, although it is the beginning and foundation of our Order. And we, considering all this, are convinced that it displeases you, but we are greatly astonished, if it does displease you, that you endure it and do not correct them."

Blessed Francis answered, and said to him: "God forgive you, Brother, that you want to oppose and antagonize me by implicating me in matters which do not pertain to my office. As long as I was in a position to direct them, the friars were true to their vocation and profession, and although I have always been ailing since the beginning of my conversion, with my small efforts I satisfied them by my example and my preaching; but later I saw that the Lord multiplied the numbers of my brethren, and they, through tepidity and poverty of spirit, began to slide back from the straight and sure way along which they used to walk . . . therefore I recommended the direction of the Order to God and the ministers. But although at the time I laid down the office of directing the brethren, I excused myself before all the friars in the assembly of the Chapter because I could no longer care for them owing to my infirmities, even now, if the brethren would conduct themselves according to my will, they should have no other minister than me to comfort and serve them, until the day of my death. For if a faithful and good subordinate has once recognized the will of his superior and observes it, he will be but little trouble to his superior. . . . But as I cannot correct and improve them by preaching, admonition and example, I will not

play the part of the executioner with punishments and castigations, like the authorities of the world. . . .

"Nevertheless I will at least continue until the day of my death, by good example and acts, to teach the brothers to progress on the way which God has shown me, and which I have shown and taught them by words and by my example. They have no excuse before the Lord, and I will not be called upon in the end to answer for them before God."

THE END: (SUMMER TO AUTUMN 1226)

94 (131)

One day, while he was lying ill at the episcopal palace at Assisi, a very spiritual friar said to him smiling, as though in jest: "For how much would you sell all your sack-cloth to the Lord [Bishop]? One day they will cover with canopies and silks this little body of yours, which now is covered with sacking." For at that time he had a hood of sacking and he was clothed in sack-cloth.

And Blessed Francis answered, but not he spoke, but the Holy Spirit through him, and he said with great fervour and gladness of spirit: "You speak the truth, for it will be so to the praise and glory of my Lord."

95 (132)

Another time, when he was seriously ill at the palace of the Bishop of Assisi, the brethren entreated him to eat something. He answered: "I have no desire to eat, but if I could have some of the fish, called angel-fish,<sup>1</sup> maybe I could eat."

Hardly had he said this, when someone arrived carrying a basket in which were three large angel-fish, well prepared, and pastries of cray-fish, which the holy father liked very much. These had been sent to him by Brother Gerard, the minister of Rieti. And the friars were amazed at the workings of divine providence and praised the Lord for providing these things for His servant, which it was impossible to procure at Assisi, the time being winter.

<sup>1</sup> "Squalus"—the only edible fish of this species is called *squalus squatina*—angel-fish or monk-fish.

Some time after Blessed Francis had composed his song of praise of the creatures, which he called the Cantic of Brother Sun, it happened that great dissension broke out between the Bishop and the Mayor of Assisi; the Bishop excommunicated the Mayor, (134) who in return caused it to be proclaimed that nobody should sell the Bishop anything, or buy anything from him, or do any business whatever with him.

Blessed Francis heard of this as he lay sick, and was moved by pity for them, especially because nobody attempted to make peace between them. And he said to his companions: "It is great shame for us, the servants of God, that the Bishop and the Mayor should hate each other so, and nobody tries to pacify them!"

And so he immediately composed another verse of the aforementioned Cantic for this occasion:

Praised be thou, O Lord, for those  
Who grant forgiveness through Thy Love  
And suffer infirmities and tribulation.  
Blessed are they who bear them with resignation,  
Because by Thee, Most High, they will be crowned.

Then he called one of his companions and said to him: "Go to the Mayor, and tell him from me to come with the town-councillors, and any others he can bring with him, to the episcopal palace."

And when that friar had gone, he said to two other companions of his: "Go, and before the Bishop and the Mayor and the others who are with them, sing the Cantic of Brother Sun. I trust in the Lord that He will humble their hearts and restore their former love and amity."

When they were all assembled on the square before the Bishop's dwelling, these two friars got up, and one of them said: "Blessed Francis during his sickness has composed a song of praise to God in His creatures, to the praise of this same Lord and to the edification of his neighbour. And he now begs you to listen to it with great devotion." And so they began to recite and to sing.

The Mayor immediately arose and, folding his hands and crossing his arms, he listened as he would to the Holy Gospel, with the

greatest devotion, and wept many tears; for he had great faith in Blessed Francis and was deeply devoted to him.

When the friars had finished singing the praises of the Lord, the Mayor said for all to hear: "Truly I tell you that I forgive the Lord Bishop, not only because I admit that he is my over-lord, but I would even do so if he had slain my brother or my son." And saying this, he threw himself at the Bishop's feet and said to him: "Here I am, ready to give you satisfaction as it will please you, for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ and His servant, Blessed Francis." And the Bishop seized his hands and raised him up, and said to him: "My office would oblige me to be humble, but, as I am quick-tempered by nature, you must forgive me!" And so, with great kindness and love, they embraced and kissed each other.

The friars were amazed and overjoyed to see thus fulfilled to the letter what Blessed Francis had foretold of their reconciliation. And all the others who were there considered it a great miracle, to be wholly ascribed to the merits of Blessed Francis.

## 97 (135)

Of all created things bereft of reason, he loved the sun and fire most. He used to say: "At morn, when the sun rises, every man should praise God who created it for our use, so that it should give light to our eyes in day-time. At eventide, when night falls, every man should praise God for Brother Fire, who gives light to our eyes at night; for we are all blind, and by these two brothers of ours God illumines our eyes; therefore, and especially for these two and other created things that serve us every day, we must praise the Creator."

This he did always, until the day of his death. And when his illness became much worse, he used to begin to sing the praises of the Lord in His creatures, which he had composed, and later he got his brethren to sing them, so as to forget the bitterness of his sufferings and infirmities in the consideration of the praises of God.

## 98 (136)

Next to the sun he had a singular affection for water, which symbolizes holy penitence and tribulation through which defiled

souls are laved; and because the first purification of the soul is effected by the water of baptism. Therefore when he washed his hands he would choose a spot where the water that fell to the ground would not be trodden underfoot. Likewise, when he had to walk over rocks, he did so with great gentleness and reverence, out of love for Him who was called a rock. [“. . . and that rock was Christ” Cor. x. 4] . . .

He told the friar who cut and chopped the wood for the fires never to cut down the whole of a tree, but to cut it in such a manner that a part of the tree should remain whole, out of love for Him who was crucified on the tree of the cross for our salvation.

Likewise he told the friar who tended the garden not to use all the soil merely for planting edible herbs, but to leave a plot to produce plants that in their time would bear our sisters, the flowers, out of love for Him who is called “the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys”. He always wanted the brother gardener to keep a part of the garden for flowerbeds, sowing and planting there all fragrant herbs and all plants that produce beautiful flowers, so that in their season all should be stimulated to praise God by the sight of these herbs and blossoms. For every created thing says and announces: “God has made me for thee, O man!”

Thus we who were with him have over and over again seen him rejoice both inwardly and outwardly in almost every creature, and when he touched them his spirit appeared to be in heaven instead of on earth.

## 99 (137)

As he was lying sick at the episcopal palace in Assisi, it seemed that the hand of the Lord was lying more heavily on him than usual, and the people of Assisi were afraid that if he should die by night, the friars might carry away his holy relics and take them to another town, so they decided to place guards around the walls of the palace every night.

The holy father, so as not to give way before the assaults of the violent pain which continually afflicted him, often asked his companions to sing the Canticle of Brother Sun to him during the day, and likewise during the night for the consolation and edification of the laymen who were standing guard outside the palace.

Brother Elias, seeing that Blessed Francis in his great sickness was thus comforted and gladdened in the Lord, said to him: "Dearest Brother, all the joy which you show for yourself and your companions in your infirmity consoles and edifies me greatly, but, seeing that the men of this town look upon you as a saint and believe that you will soon die of this your incurable disease, they might say, hearing as they do this continual singing of praises day and night: How can he show such joy now that he is on the point of death? Should he not rather think of his death?"

Blessed Francis said to him: "Do you remember how you saw a vision at Foligno, and told me that you had been told that I had only two years to live? Even before you had that vision, by the grace of God, who is the source of all good in our hearts and lays it in the mouths of His faithful servants, I frequently meditated on my death both by day and by night; but since the hour when you saw that vision, I was even more careful to consider my death every day." And then he said with great fervour of spirit: "Allow me, Brother, to rejoice in the Lord and in His praises in the midst of my infirmities, for, thanks to the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, I am thus united and conjoined to my Lord that by His mercy I can jubilate in Him, the Highest."

## 100 (138)

After Blessed Francis had composed the Praises of the Lord in His creatures, he also set down some holy words with a melody for the consolation and edification of the Poor Ladies, knowing how deeply they grieved because of his infirmity. And as he could not visit them himself, he sent these words to them through his companions.<sup>1</sup> He wished to express in these words his desire, namely that they should live and converse in great humility and be unanimous in charity. It seemed to him that their conversion and holy conversation was not only a credit to the Order of the Brothers Minor, but a great edification for the entire Church.

... In these words he had composed for them, he begged them always to live and die in the same holy charity, poverty and

<sup>1</sup> Neither the text nor the melody have been preserved, and only very few fragments of the correspondence between the Saint and the Poor Clares, which St. Clare mentions in her testament, are extant.



obedience to which God had called them from many different countries. He admonished them especially to use the alms the Lord provided gaily and gratefully to provide wisely for their bodily needs, and above all that the healthy should be patient in their ministrations to the sick, and the sick be patient in their infirmities.

## 101 (139)

In those days a physician from Arezzo, by name John Buono, who was on very familiar terms with Blessed Francis, visited him at the palace, and Blessed Francis questioned him, saying: "What think you, *Finiate*, of this my disease of dropsy?" For he did not want to call him by his proper name, Buono, which signifies "the Good", for he would not name anyone called "good" out of reverence for the Lord who said "there is none good but one, that is God" [Matt. xix, 17]. Neither would he call anyone father or master, nor address anyone thus in a letter, out of reverence for the Lord who said: "And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in Heaven. Neither be ye called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ" [Matt. xxiii, 9, 10].

And the physician said to him: "Brother, you can be cured by the grace of God." Again Blessed Francis said to him: "Tell me the truth. What is your opinion? Do not be afraid to tell me, for by the grace of God I am not such a coward as to fear death. With the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, I am so united with my Lord that I am equally content to live or to die."

Then the physician said to him openly: "Father, according to our science your disease is incurable, and I believe you will die either at the end of September or at the beginning of October."

Then Blessed Francis, lying on his bed, with the greatest devotion and reverence, lifted his hands to the Lord and with great gladness of mind and body exclaimed: "Welcome, my Brother Death!"

## 102 (140)

The most blessed father was assured of his imminent death both by the Holy Spirit and by the sentence of the physicians. Up till

When he had lain in the said palace, and he felt that he was getting steadily worse and that his strength was failing, so he had himself carried in his bed to St. Mary of Portiuncula, so that the life of his body should end there where the illumination and life of his spirit had begun.

When those who carried him came to the hospital which lies half-way on the road from Assisi to St. Mary, he told the bearers to put his bed onto the ground, and because, owing to the great and lengthy infirmity of his eyes, he could barely see, he had his bed turned round so that he faced the city of Assisi. And raising himself a little on his bed, he blessed that city, saying: "Lord, I believe that in olden times this city was the home and habitation of evil men, but I see that by Thy abundant mercy, in Thy own time, Thou hast showered Thy blessings on it . . . and let it ever be the home and habitation of those who knew Thee in truth and glorify Thy name, which shall be blessed and glorious in all eternity. Amen."

## 103 (141)

So great was his zeal to conserve the perfection of the Order, and so great was the importance he attached to the perfect observance of the Rule, that he often pondered who would be fitted to direct the whole community after his death and conserve its perfection with the help of God, but he could think of no one.

A short time before his end, one of the friars said to him: "Father, you are going to God, and this your family which has followed you will remain in this vale of tears. Therefore give us an indication if you know someone in the Order who could be trusted to fulfil the office of Minister General."

Blessed Francis answered, mingling his words with sighs: "A leader for so great and diverse an army, a shepherd for so numerous and widespread a flock—no, my son, I can see no one who would suffice for this task. But I will paint for you the picture of the kind of man who should be the leader and shepherd of my family. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Follows a description of the ideal Minister General; it is the opposite in every detail of the actual Minister General, Brother Elias.

## 104 (142)

One night (1st to 2nd October) Blessed Francis was so sorely troubled by the pain caused by his infirmity that he could hardly rest or sleep all night long. The next morning, when the pain had abated a little, he sent for all the friars dwelling in that place, and, making them sit down before him, he considered them and looked upon them as the representatives of the whole brotherhood.

And laying his right hand on the head of each one, he blessed all those present and absent, and those who were still to come into the Order until the end of the world. And it seemed that he was grieved because he could not see all his brothers and sons before his death.

Wishing also in death to imitate his Lord and Master, whom he had followed so closely in life, he asked that loaves be brought and he blessed them and then had them broken into many pieces, because he himself was not able to break them owing to his great weakness. Then he took the bread and gave each brother his share, telling him to eat it. For as the Lord before His passing had wished to break bread with the apostles as a sign of His affection for them, on the fifth week-day, so His perfect imitator, Blessed Francis, desired to extend the same sign of love to his brethren. It is manifest that he wanted to do this in imitation of Christ, because he later asked if it were the fifth week-day (Thursday). And when he was told it was already the next day, he said he had thought it to be the fifth day.

## 105 (143)

*Fragment of the last letter written by St. Francis to St. Clare.<sup>1</sup>*

"I Francis, the little brother, desire to follow the life and the poverty of our highest Lord Jesus Christ until the end. And I entreat you, my ladies, and counsel you to abide always by the most holy way of life and abide in poverty. And be most watchful that you never recede from it by the advice or counsel of others."

<sup>1</sup> Nearly all the letters and messages sent by St. Francis to St. Clare and her sisters in the course of the years have been lost, and this fragment, written shortly before his death, is one of the few extant documents. St. Clare was herself lying ill at the time, so that she could not have come to the hermitage of Portiuncula.

## 106 (144)

When he was lying ill at St. Mary of Portiuncula with the last sickness which brought about his death, he called his companions to him one day, saying: "You know how faithful and devoted Lady Jacoma of Settesoli has been and is, to me and to our Order. Therefore I believe that it will be a great consolation to her if you let her know about my present state, and ask her to send me a piece of cloth that has been blessed, of the colour of ashes; and with that cloth she might send me some of that sweetmeat she often made for me in Rome." The said sweetmeat is called "mortarolo" by the Romans, and is made of almonds and sugar and other things.<sup>1</sup>

That lady was very spiritual; she was a widow, and one of the noblest and wealthiest Romans. Through the merits and the preaching of Blessed Francis she had received such grace from the Lord that she was always full of tears and devotion for the sweet love of Christ, like a second Magdalen.

So they wrote the letter as the Saint desired, (145) and a friar went to seek one who would carry it to the aforesaid lady. And at that moment there was a knock at the door, and when a friar opened it there stood Lady Jacoma, who had come in great haste to visit Blessed Francis. One of the friars who knew her ran quickly to Blessed Francis, and with great gladness announced to him how Lady Jacoma had come from Rome with her son and many others to visit him. And he said: "What are we to do, Father? Can we let her enter and come to you?"

This he said because, by the will of Saint Francis, it was ordained in that house, for the sake of greater decorum and devotion, that no woman should enter the cloister. And Blessed Francis said: "The rule need not be observed towards this lady, who has come from distant parts with so much devotion and loyalty."

So the said lady came in to Blessed Francis, shedding many tears. And lo and behold! She had brought the ashen grey cloth for the tunic that was to be his shroud, and all the other things mentioned in the letter, as though she had already received that missive. And the said lady told the friars: "My brothers, it was said to me in

<sup>1</sup> Probably the almond confection now known as "Frangipane"—Lady Jacoma's family name was Frangipani dei Settesoli.

spirit while I was praying: 'Go, and visit your father Blessed Francis, and hasten and do not tarry, for if you tarry long you will no longer find him alive; and take with you such and such a cloth for a tunic, and such and such ingredients to make that sweetmeat for him. Likewise, for the lights, take a large quantity of wax with you, and also incense.' All these things had been mentioned in the letter that was to have been sent, with the exception of the incense.

So it happened that He who inspired the kings to bring gifts to honour His Son in the days after His nativity, also inspired that noble and saintly lady to bring gifts to honour His beloved servant in the days before his death, which was his true nativity.

Then that lady prepared the sweetmeat which the holy father desired to taste, but he ate only a little of it, for he was continually fainting away as he approached his end. She also had many candles made, which were to burn round his holy body after his death, and the friars made the tunic, in which he was buried, out of the cloth. But he ordered the brethren to sew sacking over it, as an example of holy humility and sign of the Lady Poverty. And in the very week of Lady Jacoma's coming our most holy father departed to the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

### 107 (146)

A short time before his death, some dainty food was prepared for Blessed Francis, and remembering Brother Bernard, who was the first friar to join him, he said to his companions: "This dish is good for Brother Bernard." And at once he sent for him. Brother Bernard came and sat down next to the bed on which the Saint lay, and said: "Father, I beg you to bless me and show me your love, for if you will show me your fatherly affection, I believe God Himself and all the brethren will love me better."

Blessed Francis could not see him, for he had lost his sight several days before, and, putting out his right hand, he laid it on the head of Brother Giles, who had been the third of the brethren, believing that he was laying it on the head of Brother Bernard who was sitting beside him. But at once, informed by the Holy Spirit, he said: "This is not the head of my brother Bernard."

<sup>1</sup> Lady Jacoma remained in Assisi and continued in maternal solicitude to care for the chosen companions of St. Francis and for the Poor Ladies at San Damiano. She died in 1274 and was buried in the Lower Church of San Francesco. The inscription on her tomb is: *Hic jacet Jacoba sancta nobilisque Romana.*

Then Brother Bernard came closer, and Blessed Francis laid his hand on his head and blessed him, saying to one of his companions: "Write down what I tell you: the first brother whom the Lord gave me was Brother Bernard, who from beginning to end practised the perfection of the Gospel teaching by distributing all his goods to the poor, and for that reason and for many other virtues I love him better than any other brother of the whole Order. Therefore I wish and order, inasmuch as I can, that whoever shall be Minister General shall love and honour him as much as myself. And the ministers and all the brethren of the whole Order shall look upon him as my representative." And this was a great consolation to Brother Bernard and the other brethren. (147)

## 108 (148)

After this [on Saturday, 3 October] a friar said to him: "Father, your life and your conversation was and is a light and a mirror not only for your brethren, but for the entire Church, and even so will your death be. And although your death will bring grief and sorrow to your brethren and to many others, nevertheless it will also bring them consolation and infinite joy, for you will pass on from great labour to the greatest rest, from many sufferings and temptations to everlasting peace, from temporal poverty, which you always loved and observed most perfectly, to true and infinite riches. . . ."

Then Blessed Francis, although his infirmities were troubling him more than usual, was filled with a new gladness by these words, hearing that Brother Death was fast approaching, and with great fervour of spirit he praised the Lord, saying: "Well, if it pleases my Lord that I should die soon, call Brother Angelo and Brother Leo so that they can sing to me of Brother Death."

When these two brothers had come to him, filled with grief and sadness, they sang with many tears the Canticle of Brother Sun and the other creatures of the Lord which the Saint had composed. And then, before the last verse, he added a few lines about Brother Death, saying:

"Praised be Thou, my Lord, for our Brother bodily Death,  
From whom no living man can ever scape.

Woe unto those who die in mortal sin.

Blessed those who are found in Thy most holy will,

To them the second death can bring no ill."

## 109 (149)

In the week of Blessed Francis's passing, the Lady Clare, the first flower of the poor sisterhood of San Damiano of Assisi, that most excellent emulator of Blessed Francis in the conservation of evangelical perfection, was afraid to die before him, for at that time they were both gravely ill. She wept most bitterly, and could not be comforted, because she thought she would die without having seen her only father after God, Blessed Francis, her consoler and teacher who had first grounded her in the grace of God.

And she sent word of this by a friar to Blessed Francis. And hearing this, the Saint, who cherished her with paternal affection, was moved with compassion for her. But considering that it was not possible to fulfil her wish—namely to see him—for her consolation and that of all the sisters he wrote a letter, (150) sending her his blessing and absolving her from all errors she might commit in not following his admonitions and the teachings and counsels of the Son of God. And that she might put away all sadness, he was moved by the Holy Spirit to say to the friar he sent her: "Go and tell the Lady Clare to put away all grief and sadness, because she cannot see me now. She must know with certainty that before her death she as well as her sisters will see me and receive great consolation from me."

And in fact, shortly afterwards [3 to 4 October 1226] Blessed Francis passed away in the night, and the next morning all the laymen and clerics of Assisi came and took his holy body from the place where he died with hymns and songs of praise, carrying branches of trees in their hands. And thus, according to the will of God, they carried him to San Damiano, so that the words the Lord had spoken through Blessed Francis to console his daughters and handmaidens should be fulfilled.

Outside the iron grating, through which the sisters used to receive Communion and hear the word of God, the friars lifted the holy body from the bier and held it up in their arms before the window for a long time. Thus the Lady Clare and her sisters received great consolation, although they were full of grief and affliction, and shed abundant tears at seeing themselves deprived of the consolation and counsel of such a father.

## 110 (151)

Entirely absorbed in the love of God, Blessed Francis perceived God's supreme goodness not only in his own soul, which was already graced with the perfection of every virtue, but also in all the creatures; for this reason he cherished all creatures with singular affection, and most especially those in which he saw a symbol of a divine attribute or of something pertaining to religion.

So among all the birds he preferred the little bird called lark, and known in the vernacular as *Lodola capelluta* [the crested lark]. He used to say of it: "Sister Lark has a hood like our friars, and is a humble bird, for she likes to go along the road to pick up a few grains, and will even pick up food out of the refuse. In flight she praises the Lord most sweetly, like good religious who despise earthly things, who always turn to heaven and ever strive to praise God. Her garment—that is her plumage—resembles the earth, and so she sets an example to the religious not to wear dainty and colourful garments, but clothes of ordinary price and colour, just as the earth is more ordinary than the other elements."

And because he saw these things in them, he loved them. And it pleased God that these same little birds gave a sign of affection to him in the hour of his death. For on that Saturday, after vespers, before the night when Blessed Francis passed on to the Lord, a great multitude of these birds which are called larks collected above the roof of the house where he lay, and flying round formed the figure of a wheel around the roof and singing sweetly, appeared to be praising the Lord.

## 111 (152)

Having completed the forty-fifth (153) year of his life, and twenty years of perfect repentance, on 3 October 1226 Francis passed on to the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he had loved with all his heart, all his mind, all his soul and all his strength, with ardent desire and perfect devotion, following Him perfectly, hastening rapidly in His footsteps, and at last gloriously succeeding in coming to Him who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Ghost, world without end, Amen.



## *St. Bonaventure*

### INTRODUCTORY

GIOVANNI DA FIDANZA, known as St. Bonaventure, wrote a legend of St. Francis which possessed a kind of monopoly with the admirers of the Little Poor Man from the time it became known until the middle of the nineteenth century. The picture he presents of the Saint was formed both by the veneration of a loving disciple and the wish to preserve historical accuracy, but this wish, owing to circumstances beyond his own control, was biased by considerations that had less bearing on the life of St. Francis than on the history of the Order. Bonaventure's legend was to serve the pacification of the Order, in whose ranks the followers of the primitive observance were at variance with the protagonists of its adaptation to the times. One might call it the "diplomatic" legend, the White Paper of the Franciscan Order, published by order of the Chapter by the Minister General himself, with the aim of uniting the opposing tendencies.

As we have seen from the writings of Brother Leo, the development of the Order contained the germ of a tragic conflict already during the life-time of its Founder. Though it was not a principle with St. Francis, it so happened that his first companions were laymen, united in the ideals of evangelical poverty, humility and devotion; with them he went about preaching repentance. This needed neither learning nor wealth, only the fire of the spirit.

As long as the community remained small, it was possible to carry out the ideal of the Saint in its purest form. But when the numbers of the brethren increased and included more and more students and scholars, seminarists and theologians, the ideal of the strict observance of poverty was endangered. It is significant that the first crisis occurred at Bologna, where the new Order of St. Dominic, with its students and professors, had gained a strong influence since its inception in 1219. The repercussions were not without influence on the Franciscan community. The new tendency spread to the House of Studies presided over by Peter Staccia, where the brethren glowed with ardour to acquire learning and conquer the intellectual world.

For his Umbrian disciples St. Francis had laid down the principle that students and scholars were welcome, but only under the condition that they were prepared to abandon even their knowledge and relinquish their intellectual riches so as to "throw themselves naked into the arms of the Crucified"—*nudus nudum sequi Christum*.(1) He certainly did not wish to ban all studies, knowing that they were important for preaching, but he did not want them to go further than strictly necessary in order to proclaim the simple and fundamental truth of the Christian doctrine. St. Francis's views on this matter might be condensed into the phrase: "As little study as possible, so as to preach to the people with a clear conscience, but as much prayer and contemplation as possible." His intuition warned him that as soon as he gave the slightest encouragement to the desire for academic learning or theological ambition, the pure spirit of the Franciscan ideal would be destroyed. Not only humility and devotion, holy poverty herself was menaced. Large Houses of Studies or seminaries fitted to receive a large number of students had to be on a sound financial basis, and when this was ensured by choosing stewards from the ranks of the laity, "holy poverty" became only a name. The ministers soon discovered by the example of the Dominicans that it was necessary to obtain "privileges" from the Pope in order to resist the jealousy of the regular clergy when preaching in the cities, although St. Francis in his simplicity and his absolute faith in the power of the spirit opposed this absolutely. This explains his severity towards Peter Staccia in Bologna (v. III, 37), the sorrow that clouded his last years and the solemn tone of his testament. The fact that emerges clearly from all early sources is that, to St. Francis and his early companions, in their simplicity, the new tendencies were quite unacceptable.(2)

When we consider the history of the Franciscan Order, we are tempted to ascribe St. Francis's condemnation of the beginnings of laxity to the prophetic spirit. The "Spirituals", in their official petitions to the Pope in 1300, did not hesitate to say, in respect to prevalent conditions in the Order, that the observance of poverty had become an outward show lacking in inner truth. In the course of the late Middle Ages the so-called poverty of the begging fraternities had become a joke all over Europe, as seen from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*. On the other hand there is no justification for saying that the Order, at the end of its founder's life, was adapting itself to the world and being carried away by secular turmoil.(3) Its finer elements were certainly

actuated by the desire of expanding their apostolic mission; it is understandable that they compared their own methods and ideas with those of the Dominicans, who prepared themselves for the apostolate in the great centres of learning. F. Ehrle is of the opinion that the rivalry between the twin orders played an important part in the later development of the Franciscan Order.

The decisive factor was given by the moral support of the Papal Court. Brother Elias, the Minister General, was high in the favour of Cardinal Ugolino (later Pope Gregory IX), and the latter, despite his affection for St. Francis, was a supporter of the very tendencies which the "Spirituals" condemned as "worldly prudence and caution".(4)

From a higher standpoint, especially with a view to the general culture of the Christian occident, it remains regrettable that the pure ideal of the Saint and his mystical fraternity was stifled by later developments—but the loss was at the same time a gain in other respects. When we consider the moral and spiritual stagnation of the great masses of the clergy before the emergence of the mendicant Orders, the decline of the great Benedictine abbeys that flourished from the eighth to the tenth century, the religious unrest of the times, also, in Latin countries, the alarming spread of the Albigensian and Waldensian heresies, we are not surprised that the Popes supported a far-reaching adaptation of the apostolic missions to the needs of the times.

The "*Chartularium*" of Paris proves how much the universities owed to Cardinal Ugolino (Pope Gregory IX) (5); but the academic centres of Bologna and Oxford likewise owe a great deal to the Orders of mendicant friars which stood under his protection, for their Houses of Study became unexpectedly numerous and excellent, thus rendering great assistance to the clergy of the cities.

When St. Francis had not been dead for more than a few decades, it was found to be impossible to put back the clock. John of Parma, who was Minister General from 1247 to 1257, still made an attempt to lead the community back to the original strict observance, which he followed for himself, but he had to give way to the opinion of the majority. His successor was Bonaventure, and to him the Chapter, with the moral support of the Papal Court, assigned the task of bridging over the discrepancies of the primitive ideal and the historical facts.

Bonaventure's renown as a scholar and at the same time a religious of exemplary piety was in itself a good counter-argument to those

who looked upon learning as a menace to sanctity. He was by nature a mild man, and it was well known that he never went to extremes. Not a passage of his writings contains an adverse criticism of the papal privileges, which were covertly and openly attacked by the "Spirituals". As Ehrle says, he represents the spirit of the community in its finest and most correct form. He had a sincere reverence for St. Francis and for his ideals, going so far as to say: "I would have myself ground into dust so as to lead back the Order to the purity of Blessed Francis and his companions and to their first aims"; but he also desired to see "their spirit vivifying the new observance which our changed circumstances demand". On one hand he sings the praises of the Lady Poverty, with Peckham, Olivi and Ubertino, maintaining that through her the Order is superior to all others, yet on the other hand he stresses the necessity of intensive study for those who undertake the apostolic mission (6) and endeavours to render such innovations as the instalment of fiscal procurators and the holding of university degrees acceptable to the "Spirituals". (7) This attitude explains the impression he made on John of Parma, according to Angelo Clareno: "When he is talking to me in his cell, he seems to be of the same mind as I am, but before the friars and the community he takes the opposite line." (8)

All this will hardly come to the notice of the reader of Bonaventure's description of St. Francis's life, but it is nevertheless a factor to be reckoned with. It is the great achievement of the author of the legend to have given us a portrait of St. Francis which raises him beyond personality and beyond the contention of the factions, on to a plane where he appears as an absolute symbol of evangelical poverty, passive and active devotion, while mentioning only those concrete facts of his life which illustrate the ideal of virtue in a mortal.

Bonaventure's *Life of St. Francis* was planned as the norm for the Franciscan Order in the state of development it had then reached. In its way it is a little masterpiece. It is regrettable that it took the place of all the earlier sources; their disappearance was due, as we have seen, to a decree which, according to Angelo Clareno, ordered the destruction of everything that appeared to contradict the reigning policy. (9) Bonaventure himself could use all the extant sources in the archives and consult the surviving companions of St. Francis's youth, especially Brother Leo and Brother Illuminato. Although Bonaventure's *Legend* contains little that is new, (10) his story is so

constructed that it gives a fine and impressive picture. His style has the same noble elegance and devout unction that characterizes his mystical writings, except that here he addresses himself to a very wide public and keeps to a more popular tone.

His chief aim was "to tone down certain matters for the sake of concord" (11) and his work attained the desired result, but only as long as he lived. The conflict broke out immediately at his death, at the Council of Lyons 1274, and raged with increasing bitterness. In 1277 the Chapter of Padua was forced to order a search for the original sources, which had previously been banned. (12) The writings of Brother Leo and his companions emerged from their hiding-place. (13) Bonaventure's secretary, Bernard of Bassa, published a work entitled *De Laudibus S. Francisci*, intended to satisfy the curiosity of the devout, but neither from an historical nor from a literary point of view can he be said to equal his deceased master. Also—and this was to become a practice of both factions for a long time to come—he made no mention of Celano's *Second Life* or the *Legend of the Three Companions*, which he had used, among the sources he quoted in his preface.

Posterity looked upon Bonaventure as the classical biographer of St. Francis until the last century.

## S. FRANCISCI ASSISINATIS VITA

### OF ST. FRANCIS'S HUMILITY AND OBEDIENCE

The guardian and jewel of all virtues is humility, of which the man of God had received full measure. In his own estimation he was nothing but a sinner, though in truth he was a mirror of resplendent sanctity. He strove, like a wise architect, to ground himself on the firm basis of humility, following the teaching of Christ. He used to say that the Son of God had come down to our wretchedness from the heights of His Father's bosom to be our Master in humility by His example and His words. Therefore, as a true disciple of Christ, Blessed Francis was ever ready to vilify himself in his own eyes and those of other men and he would recall the words of the Master: "For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" [Luke xvi. 15]. He would likewise say: "A man is as much as he is in God's eyes, but no more."

Judging it as foolishness to extol the favours of the world, he rejoiced when men reproached him and grieved when they praised him. He preferred to hear vituperative words about himself to laudatory ones, knowing that the former induce us to mend our ways, while the latter may lead us to our downfall. And it often happened that people extolled the merits of his saintliness; then he would bid one of the friars to do the contrary, by shouting derogatory words about himself into his ears. Thus a friar, though unwillingly, called him a rustic, a mercenary, awkward, useless fellow; gladdened in mind and countenance, Blessed Francis replied: "God bless you, my dearest son, for you have spoken most truthfully, and it is right that the son of Peter Bernardone should hear these things. . . ."

He strove to hide in his secret heart the gifts the Lord had given him, not desiring to acquire a glory that might be the cause of his downfall. Often, when people were praising him, he would say these words: "I may still have sons and daughters, please do not praise before you have certainty. No man is praiseworthy whose end is still uncertain. . . ." So as to have greater chances of gain, like the merchant in the Gospel, and to make good use of the present, he did not desire to rule, but to submit, not to command, but to obey. For this reason he relinquished the office of General of the Order and appointed a Guardian to whose will he submitted in all things. . . . Once he said to his companions: ". . . It is easy to fall from a high place, and pride may lead to our undoing; the true gain of the soul is to be found in humble lowliness. Why should we seek danger rather than a fruitful harvest, as we are given time to reap it?"

For this reason, and for humility, Francis desired his brethren to be called Brothers Minor, and the superiors of his Order Ministers, so as to follow the teaching of the Gospel, which he had vowed to observe. His disciples were to be recognized already by their name as scholars who had gone to the school of Christ to learn humility. For the master of humility, Jesus Christ, so as to instruct His disciples in perfect lowliness, had said: ". . . But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" [Matt. xx. 26, 27].

. . . Once having come to Imola, Blessed Francis went to the

Bishop of the town and asked very humbly for permission to call the people together and preach to them. The Bishop replied harshly: "It is quite sufficient, Brother, that I preach to my people." (14) Blessed Francis bowed his head with true humility and went out, but after a short while he came back again. The Bishop asked angrily what he wanted now; the Saint answered gently, his voice as humble as his heart: "Lord, if a father drives his son out of the house by one door, he should come back by another." The Bishop, disarmed by such humility, embraced Blessed Francis with a cheerful countenance and said: "You and all your brothers have my permission to preach wherever you like in my diocese, your saintly humility deserves it. . . ."

#### OF BLESSED FRANCIS'S LOVE OF POVERTY

Among the other gifts of grace which Francis received from the merciful Giver of all grace, the foremost was his progress in gaining the treasures of simplicity by his great love of Poverty. The holy man knew that the Son of God was on familiar terms with Poverty, and, now that she was repulsed by the whole world, Francis desired to wed her and cherish her perpetually, not only leaving father and mother for her sake, but dispersing everything he could ever possess. No man ever had as strong a passion for gold as Francis had for Poverty, nor did any one guard his treasures more jealously than Francis did this evangelical pearl. It offended him more than anything else if he perceived something in the brothers which was not consistent with poverty. In truth, from the beginning of his religious life to his death, he was content to possess nothing but a tunic, a cord and a pair of drawers. He would often meditate on the destitution of Christ and His holy Mother with tears, and he maintained that Poverty was the queen among the virtues, as she had become so radiantly manifest in the King of Kings and the Queen His Mother. Once, when the brethren asked him in conclave which virtue was the most fitted to make us friends of Christ, he answered, as it were revealing his innermost heart: "You must know, my brothers, that Poverty is the foremost road to salvation. She is the food of humility and the root of perfection, she bears manifold fruits, though they are hidden. Truly, she is the treasure

buried in the field for whose sake the Gospel says we should sell whatsoever we have; and even what we cannot sell is despicable in comparison with her. He who desires to attain perfection must not only renounce worldly prudence, but sometimes even the experience of learning, so that, denuded of all possessions, he may enter the kingdom of God and offer himself naked to the arms of the Crucified. No man has renounced the world perfectly who still holds the secrets of his own intellect in the shrine of his heart."

He often discoursed with the brethren on poverty, reminding them of the words in the Gospel: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has not where to lay his head." Therefore he instructed the friars to build miserable huts, according to the manner of the poor, nor were they to inhabit them as their own property, but as travellers and strangers. And he said travellers should dwell under an alien roof, yearning for their home, and pass on peacefully. He ordered some houses they had built to be pulled down or the friars to move out of them, when he perceived that the friars took pride in their ownership or erected them with a lavishness that was inconsistent with Evangelical poverty. Poverty, he said, was the foundation on which his Order rested; the firmer the foundation, the stronger the edifice; but if the ground-work crumbled, the Order too would disintegrate. . . .

Once, as the man of God was travelling through Apulia to Bari with a companion, they saw on the road a large purse filled with money almost to bursting point, a purse of the kind called "fonda" in the vernacular. The companion of Christ's poor man tried hard to induce him to pick up the purse from the ground and share out the money among the poor. The man of God refused, maintaining that the finding of this purse was a snare of the devil, and telling the friar that his advice to take the property of another in order to give it away was not meritorious, but sinful. They left the spot and continued on their way, but the friar, deluded by false piety, could find no peace, and continued to importune the man of God as though he did not care to alleviate the penury of the poor. At last the Saint in his meekness agreed to return to the spot, not intending to carry out the friar's wish, but to uncover the diabolical fraud. So he went back to the purse with the friar and a young man who was on the road. He prayed, and then told his companion to pick up the purse.



The brother shuddered, already foreseeing some diabolical sign, but out of obedience he stretched out his hand for the purse, although the doubt in his heart seemed to be holding it back. And lo! a large snake crawled out of the purse and vanished, and the purse also vanished, thus proving to the friar that he had been deluded by the devil. "It was an illusion created by the wiles of the Enemy," said the holy man to his companion. "For the servants of God, O my brother, money is the devil and a poisonous adder."

Some time later a miraculous thing happened when the holy man had to go to Siena for an urgent matter. [1226, for the operation to his eyes.] Three poor women, exactly similar in age, stature and features, met him between Campiglia and San Quirico and they addressed him courteously with a new salutation, saying: "Welcome, Lady Poverty." Hearing this, the true lover of poverty was filled with ineffable joy, for no greeting that men could have given him was closer to his heart than this. The three women suddenly vanished and the friars who accompanied him marvelled at their resemblance to each other, their salutation and their disappearance; not irrationally they decided that all this had some mystical connection with the holy man. It would appear that these three poor women with their identical features, who had greeted him in so unusual a manner and disappeared thus suddenly, signified the beauty of evangelical perfection, seeing that chastity, poverty and obedience were all three so equally resplendent in the man of God, even though he chose to exalt the excellence of poverty most of all, calling her sometimes his mother, sometimes his bride, sometimes his mistress. . .

. . . When he exhorted his brethren to beg for alms, he used to say: "Go, for in this eleventh hour the Brothers Minor have been sent into the world so that the chosen may implement to them those things which will allow them to stand before their Judge and hear His most merciful words: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me'" [Matt. xxv. 40].

. . . On high feastdays, when an opportunity presented itself, he used to go begging himself, saying that in the holy poor the words of the Prophet were fulfilled: "Man did eat angels' food" [Ps. lxxviii. 25]. Truly, this was angels' food which was requested for

the love of God, collected by holy poverty from door to door and given out of charity at the instigation of the blessed angels.

On Easter Day he was staying at a hermitage very far from any human habitation, so that he could not go to beg for alms. Remembering Him who appeared to the disciples when they were going to Emmaus under the guise of a wanderer on that same day, Blessed Francis asked his own brethren to give him alms as to a wanderer and beggar. And having accepted what they gave him with humility, he preached to them, saying that they must pass through the desert of the world as wanderers and strangers, as true Hebrews, and forever celebrate in veritable spiritual poverty the Passover of the Lord, that is the passing over from this world to the Father. (15)

#### OF BLESSED FRANCIS'S PIETY AND HOW THE IRRATIONAL CREATURES WERE DRAWN TO HIM

True godliness, which, according to the Apostle, "is profitable unto all things" [1 Tim. iv. 8], so filled the heart of Francis that it penetrated it through and through, and seemed to dominate the man of God entirely. Thus by devotion, godliness uplifted him to God, by compassion united him with Christ, by loving kindness inclined him to his neighbours, and by his universal affection to every living thing it created anew the first state of innocence. He was thus piously moved towards all creatures, and especially to all souls redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ; when he saw souls soiled by the stain of sin, he would deplore it with such tender sorrow as though he were their mother in Christ and must travail in birth daily for them. For this reason he had such reverence for all ministers of the word of God, because, for the love of his dead brother Christ, who was crucified for all sinners, they converted these souls, aroused them through their godly solicitude and led them by their solicitous godliness. He maintained that this labour of compassion was more acceptable to the merciful Father than any sacrifice, especially if it was performed in perfect charity and carried out rather by example than by words, rather through shedding tears than through loquacious sermonizing. But how pitiful, he said, was a preacher lacking in true godliness, who by his preaching did not seek the salvation of souls, but rather his own glory, or one who

through the example of his own depravity destroyed the souls he had uplifted through the true doctrine. He said that to such preachers he preferred a simple friar of incoherent speech who, by his good example, incites others to lead a good life. . . .

Thus filled with loving piety for the salvation of souls, and burning with fervent zeal, he said that he was delighted by the sweetest fragrance and soothed with precious balm when he heard the sweet praises of godly brothers in distant parts of the earth, who were leading many men on to the way of truth. When he heard such things, his spirit exulted, and he heaped blessings on those brethren who converted sinners to the love of Christ by word and deed. But those who discredited the Order by their evil deeds incurred his terrible curse: "By Thee, most holy Lord, and all the heavenly host, and by me, Thy little servant, shall they be accursed who by their bad example confound and destroy what has been built up by the saintly brethren of this Order and continues to be constructed!"

Calumny, which is the deadly enemy of charity and grace, was as abhorrent to him as the sting of an adder or the most atrocious plague. And he said that it was most abominable to all-merciful God, for the calumniator thirsts for the blood of the souls which he slays with the sword of his tongue. Once, when he heard a friar blackening the good name of another, he turned to his Vicar and said: "Arise, arise, and go into this matter diligently, and if you find that the accused friar is innocent, then you must not hesitate to administer an exemplary correction to his accuser. . . ." More than once he expelled from the Order a friar who had robbed another of his good name, saying that no man was worthy to lift his eyes to God unless he had made restitution of what he had robbed. "Far greater," he said, "is the sin of a calumniator than that of a robber, for the law of Christ, which is fulfilled in practising charity, constrains us to seek the good of the soul rather than the good of the body."

If someone was afflicted by a corporal ailment, his tender compassion was admirable, and when he saw anyone in want or suffering pain, his pious heart would be reminded of Christ. Compassion was inherent in his nature, and it was redoubled by his love of Christ. So his heart melted towards all the poor and infirm, and when he

could give no active help, he would show his loving affection. . . . So he, the most Christian of poor men, saw the image of Christ in every poor man. When he met one, he would give him the necessities of life which he himself had been given, saying that we must not only give generously, but as though we were restoring his own property to the recipient. . . .

Therefore, whenever anything was given him for his bodily needs, he would always ask the giver for permission to give it away if he should meet one in greater need than himself. He would spare nothing whatever, neither cloak nor tunic nor book, not even vestments or altarcloths, giving everything to the indigent, so as to fulfil the office of charity. And when he met a poor man carrying a load on the road, he would shift the burden on to his own weak shoulders.

When he considered the origin of all things, he would be filled with overflowing piety, and he called all creatures, no matter how lowly, by the name of brother and sister, because, as far as he knew, they had sprung from the same original principle as he himself. He preferred those who reminded him, either by their natural similarity or by Scripture imagery, of the meekness of Christ. He often saved the life of a lamb that was being led to the slaughter, in memory of the Lamb of God who chose to be brought to the slaughter for the sins of the world.

Once, the servant of God was staying at the monastery of San Verecundio, in the diocese of Gubbio; that night, a ewe gave birth to a lamb. And it happened that a ferocious sow, not sparing that innocent life, bit the lamb to death. Hearing this, the good father was moved by compassion and reminded of the stainless Lamb of God. He lamented the death of the little lamb before all the brethren and said: "Woe me, Brother Lamb, innocent animal, you who remind men of Christ! Cursed be the evil-doer who killed you, may neither men nor beasts eat of her flesh!" And, marvellous to relate, the wicked sow sickened, and after three days she paid the penalty of her crime with her own life. The carcass was thrown into the ditch of the monastery where it lay for a long time, desiccated and flat as a board, so that no one could find any nourishment on it. . . .

Once when he was on his way in the neighbourhood of Siena, he came upon a large flock of sheep in a field. When he had saluted

them lovingly, as was his wont, they all left the pasture and came running to him, lifted their heads and fixed their eyes on him. So pleased did they seem with him that the shepherds and the friars were amazed, seeing not only ewes and lambs, but even the rams so wonderfully gladdened.

Another time, at St. Mary of Portiuncula, someone gave a lamb to the man of God and he accepted it gladly, for he loved the simplicity and innocence which are natural to these animals. The holy man admonished the little sheep to listen to divine service and to take heed not to disturb the brethren in any way, and the lamb, as though recognizing the piety of the man of God, observed all this most attentively. When it heard the brethren singing in the choir, it would go into the church, and, without having been taught, bend its knees and bleat before the altar of the Virgin-Mother of the Lamb, as though attempting to salute her. And what is more, at the Elevation of the most holy Body of the Lord, during the solemnity of the Mass, it would crouch down on its knees, as though the reverence of the animal were to shame the irreverence of impious men and invite the faithful to adore the Sacrament.

At one time, Francis had a little lamb with him in Rome, out of reverence for the meek Lamb of God, and when he left, he gave it to that noble matron, namely the Lady Jacoma of Settesoli. This lamb, as though it really were the spiritual pupil of the Saint, accompanied its mistress to church, remained there standing beside her and went back with her, craving her society at all times. If the lady was late in arising in the morning, the lamb would jump up and push her with its little horns and wake her with its bleating, exhorting her by signs and gestures to proceed to church. Thus the lamb, who was Francis's disciple, became a true teacher of devotion, and the lady cherished it accordingly. . . .

Another time, when he was walking with one of the brothers through the Venetian marshes, he found a great number of birds nesting among the rushes and singing. Seeing them, he said to his companion: "Our sisters the birds are praising their Creator; let us go among them and chant the lauds and the canonical hours of the Lord." The birds did not move from the spot as they walked into their midst, but, because of their twittering, Francis and the friar could not hear each other's responses, so the holy man turned round

and said to the birds: "O birds, my sisters, stop singing until we have finished the praises that we owe to the Lord." Thereupon the birds immediately fell silent, and they made no sound until Francis and the friar had finished saying the hours and chanting the lauds without undue haste; then the Saint gave them permission to sing to the Lord. And as soon as the man of God had accorded them this licence, they resumed their accustomed song. . . .

. . . Once he was staying for a while in the hermitage at Greccio, when the inhabitants of that place were troubled by all sorts of ills. There were great numbers of wolves, so rapacious that they not only devoured beasts but even men, and great storms that devastated the corn and the vineyards. Then the preacher of the Holy Gospel preached to the afflicted people and said to them: "For the honour and glory of omnipotent God, I promise you that this pestilence will be withdrawn from you and that your temporal goods will be increased, if you will believe me and take pity on yourselves and, by making a good confession, render yourselves worthy of the fruits of repentance. On the other hand, I tell you that if you are ungrateful for the benefits you receive and return to your wickedness, the plagues will be renewed, your punishment redoubled and the wrath of God will be unleashed over you." From that hour on, after they had been moved to repentance by his exhortations, their losses stopped and their dangers ceased, and no one suffered from the wolves or from the hailstorms. And what is even more, if a hailstorm hit the neighbouring fields, it would either stop before it reached the fields of Greccio or take another direction.

#### OF THE FERVOUR OF HIS CHARITY

Who can describe the fervent charity that glowed in the heart of that chosen friend of the Bridegroom, Francis? He was like a glowing coal, consumed by the flame of divine love. When he heard a mention of God's love, he would instantly become excited, affected and inflamed, as though the plectrum of the outward sound had touched the hidden strings of his heart. He considered it a noble prodigality to give love in exchange of alms, and a great foolishness to hold it less dear than money, because the invaluable gift of divine love was the only price of the kingdom of heaven,

and He who has loved us so must be loved with great love in return.

Everything incited him to the love of God, he exulted in all the works of the Creator's hands and, by the beauty of His images, his spirit rose to their living origin and cause. He admired Supreme Beauty in all beautiful things, and by the traces impressed by God on all things he followed the Beloved. To him all creation was a stairway which led him up towards Him who is the goal of all desires. With an intensity of devotion unknown before him, he enjoyed the delights of the fount of joy in every single creature, as in rivulets flowing from it. He perceived celestial harmonies in the concord of the virtues and activities which God had given the creatures and, like the Prophet David, he was sweetly reminded by them to praise the Lord.

The love of Christ Jesus crucified pervaded his soul like the fragrance of a bundle of myrrh, and he desired, by the intense fire of his love, to merge entirely into Him. . . . Yet the excessive ardour of his charity not only raised him to God, but communicated itself by extension to all those who had mortal nature and divine grace in common with him. As he lavished his brotherly love and pity on all other creatures, it is no wonder that those created in the image of Christ and redeemed by His blood should be linked to him more closely still through Christ's mercy. He would not have ventured to count himself a friend of Christ if he had not cherished the souls redeemed by Him. He used to say that nothing was more important than the salvation of souls, and the best proof was that the only-begotten Son of God had deigned to hang on the cross for the love of these souls. This was the reason for his great efforts in prayer, his discursiveness in preaching, and his constant care to give a good example. . . . He was wont to say: "*Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, and do not give my neighbour a good example, I would be little good to anyone else and none at all to myself.*"

Christ's servant Francis, feeling that he was still far removed from the Lord while he was in his body, though by Christ's mercy he had become wholly insensible to earthly desires, prayed without intermission, so as not to be without the consolation of the Beloved, and strove to keep God ever present before his spirit. Prayer was his

solace, when his spirit already roamed through the heavenly mansions, a co-citizen of the angels, and his fervent desire sought the Beloved. Prayer gave him strength to act, and in all that he undertook he mistrusted his own activity and placed his whole trust in divine pity, throwing the entire burden of his cares onto God. . . . He had observed that when he prayed, the presence of the Holy Spirit made itself felt far more closely when he had withdrawn to a spot remote from the noise and turmoil of the world; therefore he sought out lonely places, deserts and abandoned churches where he could pray alone at night. There he often had to sustain terrible battles with the demons, who assailed him tangibly so as to distract him from his orisons. But armed with the celestial weapons, he was strengthened in virtue the more vehemently his adversaries troubled him, and the fervour of his prayer became even greater. Trustingly he would say to Christ: "Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings. . . ."

Then the Man of God would remain alone once more and be at peace. He filled the groves with his plaint and sprinkled the soil with his tears and, beating upon his breast, he conversed with his Lord in the concealment of desert places. . . . There he was seen one night praying with his hands extended in the shape of a cross, his entire body raised up from the ground and surrounded by a luminous mist, the marvellous light around his body thus bearing witness of the admirable illumination of his spirit. There likewise, as one could recognize by certain indications, hidden secrets of divine wisdom were revealed to him; nevertheless he did not reveal them to others, unless urged thereto by Christian charity or unless it was desirable for the good of others. He used to say: "It is easy to lose a priceless treasure and thus cause the Giver to withhold it a second time."

When he returned from his private devotions, during which he would actually be transformed into a different man, his chief concern was to behave in a most ordinary fashion, so that the subtle emanation of the favours he had been accorded should not evaporate by being outwardly displayed. If it happened that he was suddenly visited by the Lord in public, he would immediately seek some pretext, so that the familiar touch of the Bridegroom should not be betrayed. . . . He often said to his familiars: "When a servant of God experiences a divine visitation in prayer, he must say: 'This consolation Thou



hast sent to me, an unworthy sinner, O Lord, and I commit it to Thy custody, for I feel that I am a thief of Thy treasures'—and when he comes back from prayer, he must behave like a poor little sinner, just as though this grace had never touched him."

Once, when the man of God was praying at the hermitage of Portiuncula, it happened that the Bishop of Assisi came to visit him, while he was alone. As soon as the Bishop got there, he went with great self-assurance to the cell where the servant of God was praying. After having knocked at the door, he was about to enter the cell but, as he put his head inside the door, he saw the Saint at prayer. Then the Bishop was shaken with sudden fear, his limbs became rigid and he was incapable of speech. Suddenly he felt himself being pushed outside by divine will, and, returning by the way he had come, he fled from thence. In his stupefaction the Bishop hastened to the brethren as fast as he could, and when God gave him back his speech, his first words were a confession of his fault.

At one time it happened that the abbot of San Justino, a monastery of Perugia, met the servant of Christ on the road. Seeing him, the devout abbot quickly dismounted from his horse, saluted the man of God with great reverence, and conferred with him on the salvation of souls. After this pleasurable meeting, the abbot took his leave, asking to be included in the Saint's prayers. The man beloved of God answered: "Willingly will I pray." A short time after the abbot had left, the faithful Francis said to his companion: "Wait for me a little while, brother, for I must keep my promise." While the Saint was thus praying, the abbot felt in his spirit an unwonted heat and a sweetness such as he had never yet experienced, so that in the excessive emotion of his soul he was taken right out of himself and melted into God. This lasted only a very short time, and when he came back to himself he recognized that what he had experienced was due to the virtue of St. Francis's prayer. From then on he favoured the Order with an even greater affection than heretofore and told many people of his experience, calling it a miracle. . . .

. . . St. Francis was so greatly illuminated by the spirit of prophecy that he foresaw the future and recognized the secrets hidden in human hearts; he saw distant things as clearly as if they were present before him, and he showed his own presence in a miraculous

manner to people who were far distant from him. At the time when the army of the Christians lay outside Damietta [1219], the man of God joined it, not armed with weapons, but with faith. When on the day of battle the Christians were preparing themselves for the fray, the servant of Christ, hearing this, lamented loudly and said to his companion: "When battle has been joined, the Lord shows me that it will not go well with the Christians. Truly, if I reveal this, they will say I am a fool, but if I remain silent I will not escape my own conscience. What do you think of it?" His companion answered: "Brother, how men judge you should matter least of all to you; it would be nothing new for them to call you a fool. Exonerate your own conscience and fear God more than men." Having heard these words, Christ's herald went and brought the salutary warning to the Christian army, forbidding them to join battle, and announcing their downfall if they persisted. He spoke the truth, but they hardened their hearts and refused to turn back. The battle was joined and went against the Christians, so that their entire army was put to flight, and it ended with defeat instead of triumph. The slaughter was such that the Christians lost about six thousand men, dead or taken prisoner.

Another time, after St. Francis had returned from beyond the sea, he came to Celano to preach there and a knight begged him with great devotion and insistence to dine at his house. So he went to the knight's house, and the entire family exulted at the coming of the poor guest. Before they went to table, St. Francis offered thanks to God as was his wont, and remained for a time with his eyes uplifted to heaven. When he had finished praying, he called his kind host aside in a confidential manner, and said to him: "Listen, Brother Host, I have done what you asked me and come into your house to dine with you. Now you must quickly do what I ask you, for you will not dine here, but elsewhere. Therefore confess your sins at once, and repent with true sorrow and a contrite heart, and let nothing remain on your conscience without revealing it in a truthful confession. God will repay you to-day for the great devotion you have lavished on His poor." The knight did as the holy man told him, made a general confession to one of the Saint's companions, put his house in order and prepared himself as well as he could to meet death. At last they went to table. As the others were beginning

to eat, the host suddenly breathed his last, carried off by a sudden death, as the man of God had foretold. . . .

Another time, a very devout noblewoman came to the Saint, so as to confide her sorrows to him and ask his help. She had an exceedingly cruel husband, who opposed everything she did in the service of Christ. And she came to beg the Saint to pray for her husband that God in His clemency might deign to soften his heart. St. Francis, hearing this, said to her: "Go in peace, confidently expecting your husband to be a comfort to you in future." And he added: "Tell him from God and from me that now is the time of mercy, later the time of justice." The lady received his blessing and returned to her house; when she saw her husband, she repeated to him what the Saint had said. The Holy Spirit descended over him, he was renewed and said to her with great gentleness: "Mistress, let us serve the Lord and save our souls."

The Heavenly Master reveals the great mysteries to the simple and lowly, as it first appeared in David, outstanding among the Prophets, later in Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, and lastly in Christ's little poor man Francis. They were all unlettered men and simple, and were made illustrious in learning by the Holy Spirit. The first, a shepherd, was called to tend the flock of the Israelites that had been led out of Egypt; the second, a fisherman, to fill the net of the Church with the multitude of the believers, and the last, a merchant, that he might acquire the pearl of evangelical life by selling and dispersing all he possessed for the love of Christ.

## *Fioretti*

### *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*

1322-1328

#### INTRODUCTORY

THE *Fioretti* represent the choicest jewel among the Franciscan legends. This is a truly popular book, originating in the very soul of the Italian people, a people that possesses simplicity and gaiety of feeling, natural understanding of symbolism in its religious instincts, and artistic intuition in intellectual matters. For the simple people of Italy the *Fioretti* are the "layman's breviary", as Dante is for the educated classes—and, according to Sabatier, these Franciscan legends are even more universally read than Dante or the Bible. G. L. Passerini, who published a new edition of the *Fioretti* in 1907, calls it "a book that enchants us by its simplicity, its delicacy and its depth".

According to Passerini, it seemed unbelievable, almost like a jest, when a learned historian of the seventeenth century, the Franciscan Luke Wadding, expressed the opinion that this typical product of the Italian genius, with its "sincere simplicity and delicious ingenuity . . . the agility of its wonderful style, the suave freshness and limpidity of its pure language", was not originally written in Italian, but in Latin and only later translated into the *soave lingua Toscana*. However, the Academia della Crusca of Florence discovered in 1843 that an older Latin original existed; finally Sabatier studied the origins of the legend and arrived at the conclusion that the Latin *Floretum* represented a part of a larger collection, called *Actus S. Francisci* which was written in Dante's time and translated a little later for the good of the people into the common vernacular.

Then it was remembered that the Latin tongue had been universally spoken by the forebears of those who had later changed it, little by little, into the softer harmonies of the *lingua Toscana*.

The *Fioretti* are a true product of the Italian soil, and a true son of its people was the first to set them down. Did not St. Francis himself, son of Umbria that he was, sing in the Provençal tongue

and write in Latin when he addressed himself to "all the brethren in the world"?

It is chiefly due to this legend that the Saint is loved and admired all the world over. True, Sabatier exaggerates when he says: "If we knew nothing of St. Francis save what Thomas de Celano and Bonaventure tell us, he would be a name more in the *Commune Sanctorum* like St. Dominic or St. Anthony of Padua, and he would not be the unique phenomenon that he is in the annals of Christ's Church." This attitude of the great Franciscan expert is probably due to his dislike of the "official" works of Celano, not to speak of Bonaventure. But we can certainly say that the *Fioretti* are among the loveliest flowers in the garland of legends around the little poor man. They combine gaiety and solemnity, childlike elements and deep symbolism, with a great song of love and compassion, presenting metaphysical truth under the familiar symbols of everyday life, and thus, as a true expression of the Latin genius, they are especially dear to the people who created them.

The author of this collection has remained anonymous, though in recent times it is believed that we know a little about him. Fundamentally it is of no importance—the *Fioretti* are stories of the people for the people, in which the experience and wisdom of an old man is handed on to youth.

There is a very subtle element about the symbolism of the events related here. Every story means more than it actually says; the miracles they describe are more than ascertainable facts, they express ideas in parables, comparable to the Gospel of St. John. The stories they contain about St. Francis and his companions are a priceless contribution to our knowledge of the Saint and they are based on actual events, but the outer event merges imperceptibly into the inner experience.

Let us take the story of the robbers, who meet the Saint and are transformed into friars of his Order. The popular mind instinctively applies the parable to the individual soul—there is a robber in each of us and likewise the desire to become a better man. . . .

To return to the question of the authorship of these legends. First it is essential to distinguish between the different layers they include. The first part of the *Fioretti* contains the portraits of the Saint's immediate *entourage*—Brothers Bernard, Masseo, Silvestro, Giles and Leo, and Saint Clare. It contains the immortal pages about perfect joy, the treasure of poverty, the obedience of Brother Masseo when he turned round and round . . . all examples of humour, mild,

ripe wisdom, and optimistic piety. Where these tales concern the Saint, they are characterized by such familiarity and living vividness of vision that one can hardly doubt that they were set down by one of his early companions. Who else could it be, if not his "secretary" and literary executor, the narrator of the *Speculum*?

This section of the *Fioretti* was collated at about the same period—between 1322 and 1328—as the *Speculum Perfectionis*, 1318. The material is very similar to that of the stories to be found in the aforementioned collection, as well as in the *Legend of the Three Companions* and the *Second Life* of Celano, which all points to the Leo-tradition. Another indication is to be found in the expressions used; for instance, in the *Fioretti* as in the early legends, the settlements of the brethren are called *luogo*—*locus* (the place) in Latin—and never "monastery" as in Bonaventure's legend. This alone is a proof of an early stage in the development of the Order. It is also remarkable that, though Mount Alverna and the Portiuncula play a great part, there is no mention of the great church over the Saint's tomb, towards which the "Spirituals" adopted the same attitude as the early companions.

Thus it seems justified to consider these scattered "little flowers" as "seedlings" from the manuscripts left by Brother Leo at San Damiano. The seed had germinated after half a century. Obviously the compilers of the *Speculum Perfectionis* did not wish to include these particular notes of Brother Leo in their collection, which was in fact a polemic for the Saint's spiritual heritage. It would have been a pity if these reminiscences, these mystical "flowerets", had been seized by such harsh winds.

So we can look upon Brother Leo as the actual originator of the first part of the *Fioretti*, although that does not mean that the exhaustive poetical descriptions of the incidents originated from his pen. (It will later be seen that this is out of the question. The two allegorical tales, namely the legend of the wolf of Gubbio and Anthony's sermon to the fishes, are certainly, more than the other stories, the work of the editor, who here became a true poet.) Certainly we have here, to quote Jørgensen: "a collection of Franciscan traditions very similar to the 'flowers' plucked in that garden in Greccio by Leo, Angelo and Rufino two generations earlier (1246). . . ."

The third part of the *Fioretti*, which treats of the happenings on the "holy mountain" Alverna, has similar origins. The author mentions the oral tradition of Brother Leo, which other chroniclers

had already quoted, for at the end of the third section he says: "Brother Jacomo of Massa received this story from the lips of Brother Leo, and Brother Ugolino of Monte S. Maria, sometimes called Monte S. Giorgio, received it from the lips of the aforementioned Brother Jacomo. The scribe himself received it from the mouth of Brother Ugolino, an absolutely trustworthy man." We will return to this question later.

It is a different matter when we come to the second part, in which a later generation of actors come on to the scene, which in itself is new and more limited. The reigning tone is one of a kind of piety not exactly contrary to that of the tradition of Brother Leo, but markedly different. There is a tendency to emotion and sentiment, and a visionary ardour can be felt throughout. The personages are Conrad of Offida, Bentivoglio of San Severino, Pietro of Monticello, Giovanni of La Verna. All these men lived at the turn of the thirteenth century and were devout Spirituals—*zelanti* (zealots) was the name by which they called themselves proudly, while their opponents used it as a term of opprobrium.(1)

The Popes Boniface VIII and John XXII, separated by the friendly reign of Clement V, opposed them. In their devotion and humility, they were unwilling to join the revolt of Fra Dolcino and the other "fraticelli", or to follow the example of Fra Liberato and withdraw from the Order to join the hermits of S. Coelestine (Olivi had advised them strongly against this course.)(2) So the best of the Spirituals and their ministers, Conrad of Offida at their head, moved to the outlying *romitori* or hermitages. These had been much sought after as fit places for meditation in the early days of the Order, but owing to the spiritual change of the majority they had fallen into disuse. Once again the intimate communion with nature and the solitary meditations practised by St. Francis became the foundation of their apostolate. The Spiritual brethren were scattered in small groups from the wild Abbruzzi over the mountainous country of Piceno and the Marches, while the actual core of the mystic flame glowed in the March of Ancona towards eastern Umbria, in the Sybilline Hills, where Brother Bernard, the Saint's first companion whom he blessed on his death-bed, had been forced to conceal himself during the last years of his life.(3) The pious brothers prayed and mortified themselves, living in the memory of the blessed father and for the happier times which they foresaw in their visions. Those versed in the history of that period know how great an influence emanated from the forged prophecies of Jacomo, awakening

fantastic hopes of an approaching "Era of the Holy Ghost" and the election of an "Angel-Pope".(4) The originators were Spirituals who dreamt of a return of the Order to its origins and of a reversal of the secularized Church to her pristine purity, which to them meant absolute poverty and destitution.

But although the *Fioretti* originated in the circles of the Spirituals, nothing of unbalanced zeal can be found in them. The ideal these stories proclaim is that of pure mysticism, and the heroes they sing are not prophets, but heavenly children. Their authors are not ignorant of the evils of the times, but they appear not to see them, looking into the light. The poverty and humility of St. Francis is their ideal, the poverty and suffering of Christ their consolation.

These qualities explain why they escaped the fury of persecution at the time. Even their adversaries respected them, the people loved them, and their graves became places of pilgrimage.

The stories of their lives and their writings were collected.(5) Authors of note, like Angelo Clareno and Ubertino da Casale, were full of admiration for them, even though they opposed their policy. In time they succeeded in "imparting to the Order much of their fiery idealism".(6) Many of the personages that appear in the *Fioretti* were raised to the status of saints by the devotion of the people, so that the Church, who had officially frowned on them, came to canonize them in the course of the centuries.(7) They encouraged Angela da Foligno on her mystic way, for Ubertino da Casale was her spiritual director.(8) Their group included Jacopone da Todi, the fiery mystical poet, imprisoned by Pope Boniface and released and favoured by his successor, Pope Benedict.(9)

Dante himself revered them as the true representatives of the Franciscan spirit, and in the second Canto of the *Paradiso* he lamented the present state of the Order, after glorifying its Founder in immortal verses, but admitted that a few still followed the shepherd, though "so few, that a very little cloth sufficed for their hoods".

The entire collection of the *Little Flowers* originates in the circle of the Spirituals, the second part entirely, the first and third as far as the selection and literary expression is concerned. The narrator of the second part names himself in the passage (10) which reads: "All this was told to me, Ugolino, by John himself." This was probably Brother Ugolino da Sarnano, who died in 1348, and possibly his uncle, Ugolino da Monte Giorgio, communicated the older parts of the *Floretum* (our first and third part) to him.(11)

The author of the Italian translation which made the *Fioretti*



famous is unknown. Some experts believe him to have been Giovanni da Settimo, others Giovanni di Marignolli, but it remains uncertain. It might even be possible that the younger Ugolino lit upon the happy idea of translating his uncle's reminiscences and his own contributions into the vernacular.

The entire work carries the imprint of the suave landscape that stretches through the centre of Italy between the Apennines and the Adriatic, limited by Ancona in the north and by the mountain range of Monte Rubbiano in the south. From Perugia and Assisi it extends across the Apennine range—here called the “Sibylline Hills”—to the east. Despite its natural beauties, it is seldom visited by tourists, for it is farming country, remote from the great artistic centres. The villages and little towns lie, bathed in the bright southern light, on hill-tops like fortified castles, or resting against a slope, while the most populous are imbedded in the fertile valleys. We can follow it along the mountain range from Monte San Vicino in the north, via San Severino, Camerino to Sarnano and San Giorgio, in the direction of Ascoli: from the east along the sea coast from Ancona, Osimo, Recanati by Macereta and Penna to Fermo and from there to Monterubbiano and Offida. Two days suffice to traverse the region. The inhabitants of the villages are gay and frank, near to nature and devout. The girls sing hymns to the Blessed Virgin to old, old tunes—maybe the identical tunes with which their ancestresses hymned the nature-deities of light and fertility. They are a friendly people and St. Francis and his companions, who came here on their wanderings, have left them a living heritage: abstemiousness, humility and kindness.

## PART I

### THE SAINT AND HIS BRETHREN

#### I

*Saint Francis, at the foundation of his Order, elected twelve companions, as Christ did twelve Apostles.*

Let us begin by considering the conformity of the glorious St. Francis, in all the acts of his life, to Christ. Even as Christ, when He began to teach, elected twelve Apostles to follow Him in poverty

and every virtue, disdaining all things of the world, so St. Francis, when he founded his Order, chose his twelve companions, who professed perfect poverty. . . . And even as the twelve Apostles were a wonderful example to all the world in their saintliness and their plenitude of the Holy Spirit, so these blessed companions of St. Francis were men of such exceptional holiness that the world had not seen their like since the days of the Apostles.

One of them was caught up into the third heaven, like St. Paul, and this was Brother Giles (Egidio). Another, namely Brother Philip Lungo, was touched on the lips by the angel with a coal of fire, as was the Prophet Isaias. Another, Brother Silvester, discoursed with God as one friend with another, as Moses had done. Another again, in pure intellection, soared into the very light of divine wisdom like John the Evangelist, the Eagle, and this was no other than the most humble Brother Bernard, who expounded most profoundly the Holy Scriptures. Another was consecrated by God and canonized in Heaven while he yet lived on earth; this was Brother Ruffino, a nobleman of Assisi. And thus they were all blest with singular signs of holiness, as we will set forth in due course.

## II

### *Of Brother Bernard of Quintavalle, the first Companion of St. Francis.*

The first companion of St. Francis was Brother Bernard of Assisi, who was converted in the following manner. (12)

St. Francis was still wearing secular garb, though he already disdained the world, and going about scorned and mortified for the sake of penitence, so much so that he was looked upon by many men as a fool; he was mocked as a madman, and driven away by his relations and by strangers, who threw stones and mud at him. Yet he endured every insult patiently, as though he were deaf and dumb. Thereupon Messer Bernard of Assisi, who was one of the most noble, rich and wise men of the city, began to ponder on the Saint's excessive disdain of the world, his great patience in bearing injuries and on the constancy and patience with which he bore himself, although for two whole years he had been hated and despised by

all men, and he said to himself that there could be no doubt but that this Francis had abundant grace from God. So he invited him to dine with him one evening and stay the night, and this St. Francis accepted.

Messer Bernard had set his heart on watching his holy manner of life, so he had a bed prepared for him in his own chamber, where he always kept a lamp burning. St. Francis, intent on concealing his saintliness, incontinently threw himself onto the bed as soon as he had entered the room and pretended to sleep. After a while Messer Bernard did likewise, and began to snore very loudly, as though he were sound asleep.

Thereupon St. Francis, thinking that Messer Bernard was really asleep, arose from his first slumbers and knelt down to pray, lifting his eyes and his hands to heaven, and saying with great fervour and devotion: "My God, my God!" and uttering these words, with abundant tears, he remained until the early morning, repeating only the words "My God!" over and over again.

St. Francis pronounced them in contemplation and admiration of the excellence of God's majesty, in deigning to condescend to this perishing world, and through His poor little servant Francis providing a remedy of salvation for his soul and the souls of others. . . . When Messer Bernard saw, in the light of the lamp, the devout acts of St. Francis and had considered the words he spoke, he was touched by the Holy Spirit and inspired to change his life. Therefore, when it was day, he called St. Francis and said to him:

"Brother Francis, I have decided in my heart to abandon the world and to follow you as you will command me."

Hearing this, St. Francis rejoiced inwardly and said:

"Messer Bernard, what you tell me is so great and wonderful a thing that we must seek counsel about it from our Lord Jesus Christ and pray that He should show His will concerning it and teach us how to put it into execution. Therefore let us go together to the Bishop's palace, where (13) there is a good priest, and ask him to say Mass; then we will remain in prayer until Tierce, beseeching God to reveal to us, when we have opened the missal three times, which way it pleases Him that we should elect."

Messer Bernard answered that he would be well pleased to do this. Thereupon they set out and went to the Bishop's palace; after

they had heard Mass and remained in prayer until Tierce, the priest did as St. Francis asked him and took the missal and, having made the sign of the cross, opened it in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, three times. The first time they found the words Christ spoke to the young man who asked Him how he might attain perfection: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor . . . and come and follow me" [Matt. xix. 21]. . . .

When Messer Bernard heard this, he went out and sold all he had, for he was very rich, and very joyfully he distributed everything among the poor, the widows, the orphans, the pilgrims, the monasteries and the hospitals, and St. Francis helped him faithfully and wisely.

Messer Bernard received such abundant divine grace that he was often rapt in ecstasy. St. Francis said that he was worthy of all reverence, and that it was really he who had founded the Order, seeing that he was the first to leave the world, keeping nothing for himself and giving all he had to Christ's poor, and having embraced the way of evangelical poverty, abandoning himself naked into the arms of the Crucified, whose name be blessed, world without end, Amen.

### III

*How St. Francis was disturbed when he called Brother Bernard and received no answer.*

The devoted servant of the Crucified, St. Francis, by the harsh penances he inflicted on himself and his continual weeping, had become nearly blind, so that he could hardly see the light. Once he left the place where he was and went to seek Brother Bernard to speak with him of divine things. But when he came there, Brother Bernard was at prayer in the wood, rapt up in ecstasy. Thereupon St. Francis went into the wood and called to him "Come and talk to this blind man!"

But Brother Bernard did not answer, for being a man given to deep contemplation, his mind was suspended and uplifted to God. St. Francis had experienced several times already that Bernard had singular grace in discoursing of God, and this was a reason why he wished to converse with him.

After a short interval, he called him again, and then a third time, with the same words, but Brother Bernard did not hear him, and therefore he did not go to him.

Thereupon St. Francis went away rather sadly, feeling surprised and vexed that Brother Bernard had not come to him after he had called him three times. He went away with these thoughts, but after he had gone a little way, he said to his companion: "Wait for me here!" and went to a lonely spot nearby. He collected his soul in prayer and besought God to reveal to him why Brother Bernard had not answered.

Thereupon a voice from God came to him and spoke:

"You poor little man, wherefore are you perturbed? Should a man forsake God for a creature? When you called him, Brother Bernard was communing with Me, that is why he could not come to you, nor answer you; therefore do not be surprised that he could not talk to you, for he was so far away from his body that he could not hear a single one of your words."

When St. Francis had heard this answer given him by God, he immediately returned in great haste to Brother Bernard, to accuse himself in great humility of the thoughts he had harboured against him. When Brother Bernard saw him coming towards him, he hastened to meet him and threw himself at his feet.

St. Francis bade him get up and confessed to him very humbly how perturbed he had been and what he had thought about him, and how God had reproved him for it. Then he concluded with these words: "I command you by holy obedience to do what I will bid you."

St. Bernard feared that St. Francis might order him to do an excessive thing, as he often did, and, hoping to escape his obedience in an honest manner, he answered: "I am ready to obey you, if you will promise me to do likewise as I command."

When St. Francis had promised, Brother Bernard said: "Tell me then, Father, what do you want me to do?"

Thereupon St. Francis said: "I command you by holy obedience that, to punish me for my presumption and the impetuosity of my heart, when I throw myself on the ground, you should place your foot on my throat and the other on my mouth, and that you should thus walk over me three times, crying shame upon me, and that you

should say: 'Lie there, you lout, son of Pietro Bernardone! What reason have you for your arrogance, you who are such a vile creature?' "

Hearing this, Brother Bernard, although he found it very hard to do so, did as St. Francis had commanded for the sake of holy obedience, acquitting himself of it as courteously as he could.

When he had done so, St. Francis said: "Now you command me to do what you want me to do, for I have promised you obedience."

Brother Bernard said: "I command you by holy obedience that, each time we are together, you should reprove and correct me harshly for my faults."

At this St. Francis was amazed, for Brother Bernard was of such saintliness that he held him in great reverence and did not deem him reprehensible in any matter. Therefore from then on St. Francis avoided his company for the said obedience, so that he should not say a reproving word to him whom he knew to be so saintly. But when he desired to see him or to hear him discourse of God, he would leave him as soon as he could and go away.

It was very edifying to see the great love, reverence and humility with which St. Francis treated Brother Bernard and spoke of him, the first-born of his sons. Praise be and glory to Jesus Christ, Amen.

## V

### *How Brother Bernard founded a House at Bologna.*

As St. Francis and his companions were called and chosen by God to carry the cross of Christ in their hearts, and to preach it by their deeds and with their tongues, so they seemed and were men crucified, as much by their actions as by the austerity of their lives, and because they preferred shame and contumely for the love of Christ to the honours, the respect and the vain praises of the world. They even rejoiced in insults and mourned when they were honoured. . . .

It happened in the beginning of the Order (14) that St. Francis sent Brother Bernard to Bologna so that he might bring forth fruit for God there, according to the grace which had been vouchsafed him.

And Brother Bernard, signing himself with the sign of the cross for holy obedience, sallied out and arrived at Bologna.

When the children saw him in his vile, threadbare habit, they scoffed and jeered at him as at a madman. Brother Bernard endured it all patiently and gaily for the love of Christ, and wishing to be even more ill-used he set himself purposely in the principal square of the city. As he was sitting there, a crowd of boys and men collected round him; one tugged at his cowl from the back, another from the front, another again pelted him with dust, another with stones, and some pushed him about. But Brother Bernard remained unperturbed and patient, his countenance serene, and neither complained nor moved away, and for several days he returned to this place to endure similar treatment.

Since patience is a work of perfection and a proof of virtue, a learned doctor of the law, (15) seeing the great constancy and virtue of Brother Bernard, and how he remained unperturbed by all sorts of molestations and taunts, during all these days, said to himself: "It is impossible that this should not be a holy man." And approaching him, he asked: "Who are you; why have you come here?"

And Brother Bernard answered him by putting his hand to his breast and drawing out the Rule of St. Francis, and giving it to him so that he should read it. When he had read it, considering the high state of perfection Brother Bernard had reached, he turned to his companions with amazement and admiration and said:

"Truly, this is the highest state of religion I have ever heard of, and this man and his companions are among the most holy men in this world. It is most pitiful that he should be insulted instead of most highly honoured, for it is certain that he is a great friend of God."

And he said to Brother Bernard: "If you would found a House in a place suitable for you to serve God, I would gladly give you one for the salvation of my soul."

Brother Bernard answered: "My Lord, I believe that our Lord Jesus Christ has inspired you to do this, and I accept your offer gladly for the honour of Christ."

Thereupon the said judge with great gladness and love led Brother Bernard to his house, and then gave him the promised dwelling, where he had everything adapted and prepared at his own expense.

... (16) When St. Francis heard all this as it had come to pass, and how God had operated through Brother Bernard, he gave thanks to God, who was thus beginning to spread the voluntary poor and disciples of the cross, and he sent some of his companions to Bologna and into Lombardy, where they took several Houses in different parts of the country. Praise and all reverence to the good Jesus.

## VI

*How Brother Bernard remained Vicar or General of the  
Order after the death of St. Francis.*

Brother Bernard's saintliness was such that St. Francis had great reverence for him and praised him many times.

One day while St. Francis was most devoutly at his orisons, it was revealed to him by God that by divine permission Brother Bernard was to sustain many and violent assaults by the demons. Thereupon St. Francis, who had great compassion for the said Brother Bernard, whom he loved as his own son, interceded for him with tears during many days, and recommended him to Jesus Christ, praying that He might give him victory over the devil. One day, while St. Francis was thus praying very devoutly, God spoke to him thus:

"Francis, fear nothing, for all the temptations by which Brother Bernard must be assailed are according to God's will for the exercise of virtue and so that he may gain the crown of merit; in the end he will triumph over all the fiends, for his place is prepared at the celestial banquet."

Hearing this answer, St. Francis gave thanks to God very joyfully, and from that hour onwards he regarded Brother Bernard with even greater affection and reverence than heretofore. This he did not only show him during his lifetime, but also at his death.

For when St. Francis was about to die, surrounded like the patriarch Jacob by his devoted sons, who were mourning and weeping at parting from so lovable a father, he asked:

"Where is my first-born? Come to me, son, so that my soul may bless you before I die." (17)

Thereupon Brother Bernard whispered to Brother Elias, who was



Vicar of the Order: "Father, you go to the right hand of the Saint, that he may bless you."

As Brother Elias placed himself at his right hand, St. Francis, who had lost his sight through too much weeping, laid the said hand on Brother Elias's head and said:

"This is not the head of my first-born, Brother Bernard."

Then Brother Bernard approached him from the left, and St. Francis crossed his arms and laid his right hand on the head of Brother Bernard and his left on that of Brother Elias, and said to the former: "May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ bless you with every spiritual and celestial benediction in Christ, for you were the first to be chosen in this holy Order to give an evangelical example and follow Christ in evangelical poverty, and you not only gave away what you had and distributed it entirely and freely to the poor for the love of Christ, but you offered your own person to God in this Order, as a sacrifice of sweetness; blessed be you therefore by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by me, his poor little servant, with eternal benedictions, walking and standing, waking and sleeping, living and dying. Whosoever blesses you shall be blessed, and he who curses you will not remain unpunished. Be you the principal of all your brethren, let all the friars obey your commands. You shall have licence to receive whom you will into this Order, and to eject from it whom you will, and no brother shall have authority over you, and you shall be free to go and to stay wherever you will."

After the death of St. Francis, the brethren loved and revered Brother Bernard as their venerable father. And when he was about to die, many friars from different parts of the world came to him, and among them came the divinely initiated Brother Giles and said to him joyfully: "Sursum corda, Brother Bernard, sursum corda!" And the holy Brother Bernard said secretly to one of the friars that they should prepare a place suitable to meditation for Brother Giles, and this was done. When Brother Bernard was in the last hour of his agony, he caused himself to be raised up and spoke to the brothers who were with him, saying:

"My very dear brothers, I do not want to say many words to you, but you must remember that you have the same state of religion that I had, and the state I have now you will have. And I know in my soul that to gain a thousand worlds like this one I would not have

renounced serving our Lord Jesus Christ and you. I entreat you, my dearest brothers, to love one another."

And after these words and other good admonishments he lay back on his bed and his face became resplendent and joyful beyond measure, at which all the brethren were greatly amazed, and in that joyfulness his saintly soul, crowned with glory, passed from the present life to the blessed life of the angels. (18) Praise be and glory to Christ, Amen.

## VII

*How St. Francis fasted for forty days and ate nothing  
but half a loaf.*

Because the true servant of Christ, St. Francis, was in some things almost a second Christ given to the world for the salvation of the people, God the Father made him in many of his acts conform to His Son Jesus Christ as is shown by the venerable college of his twelve companions and by the marvellous mystery of the stigmata, and by the uninterrupted fast of forty days, which he held in the following manner.

St. Francis had gone on the day of Carnival (Shrove Tuesday) to the lake of Perugia, to stay the night in the house of one of his followers. There he was inspired by God to keep that Lent on an island in the said lake, and he entreated his follower for the love of Christ to row him across to an island of the lake in his little boat, and to do this on the night of Ash Wednesday so that no one should be aware of it.

This man, because of the great devotion he had for St. Francis, carried out his wish most solicitously and rowed him across to the said island; St. Francis took nothing with him save two small loaves. When they arrived at the island and the friend took his leave to return home, St. Francis begged him earnestly not to reveal to anyone that he was there, and not to come for him until Holy Thursday.

Thus the man departed, and St. Francis remained alone. As there was no shelter where he could stay, he went into a dense thicket where the thorns and little trees formed a kind of hovel or lair, and in that place he devoted himself to prayer and to the contemplation

of celestial things. There he remained all through Lent without eating or drinking, except for half of one of the little loaves, as was discovered by his follower on Holy Thursday, when he came back for him and found one of the two loaves untouched, and half of the other. It is thought that he ate the other half out of reverence for Christ's fast, when our Lord fasted forty days and forty nights without taking any material sustenance. And thus by eating that half loaf, St. Francis banished the poison of vainglory, while following the example of Christ by fasting forty days and forty nights.

Later, on that spot where St. Francis had lived in such marvellous abstinence, God wrought many miracles because of his merits, and for that reason men began to erect houses there and dwell in them. After a short time a fine and strong castle was built and also a House for the brethren, which was called the House of the Island. (19) And even to-day the men and women of that settlement have a great reverence for the spot where St. Francis kept the aforesaid Lent.

## VIII

### *How St. Francis instructed Brother Leo as to the nature of perfect joy.*

One day when St. Francis came from Perugia to St. Mary of the Angels (Portiuncula) with Brother Leo in winter, and the great cold was tormenting him, he called Brother Leo, who was walking ahead of him, and said:

"O Brother Leo, although God is pleased that the Brothers Minor give a great example of saintliness and edification in all lands, nevertheless you must write down and note diligently that not in that consists perfect joy."

And going a little further, St. Francis called out a second time:

"O Brother Leo, even if a Brother Minor should give sight to the blind, make straight the crooked, cast out the devils, give back their hearing to the deaf and make the lame to walk and the dumb to speak, and even more, resuscitate a man dead four days, write that not in that consists perfect joy."

And going on again, St. Francis called out loudly: "O Brother Leo, if a Brother Minor possessed every language and every science

and the whole of the Scriptures, even if he could prophesy and reveal not only the future but the secrets of the conscience and the soul, write that not therein consists perfect joy."

Passing on a little further, St. Francis again called out loudly: "O Brother Leo, little lamb of God, even if a Brother Minor should speak with the tongue of an angel and know the course of the stars and the virtues of the herbs, even if all the treasures of the earth had been revealed to him and he knew the qualities of the birds, the fish and all the animals, of men and of trees and stones and roots and waters—write that not therein consists perfect joy."

And going on another stretch, St. Francis called loudly: "O Brother Leo, even if a Brother Minor could preach so eloquently that he converted all the infidels to the faith of Christ, write that not therein consists perfect joy."

And thus he spoke for the best part of two miles, until Brother Leo in great amazement questioned him, saying:

"Father, I beseech you for God's sake, tell me wherein consists perfect joy!"

And St. Francis answered him thus:

"When we come to Saint Mary of the Angels drenched by the rain, numbed with cold, covered with mud and tormented by hunger, and knock at the gate, and the porter comes and asks: 'Who are you?' and we answer: 'Two of your brothers', and he says: 'You are lying, you are a pair of scoundrels who go around deceiving people and robbing alms from the poor, go away!' and refuses to open and leaves us standing outside in the snow and the rain, shivering and hungry until night-time: then if we endure so much abuse and cruelty patiently and calmly and without murmuring, thinking with humility and charity that this porter knows us as we really are, and that God makes him turn against us thus, O Brother Leo, write that therein consists perfect joy. And if we persevere and go on knocking, he will come out angrily and chase us away like importunate louts with insults and blows, saying: 'Get away from here, you good-for-nothing thieves, get you gone to the workhouse! for here there is neither lodging nor food for you.' To endure this patiently, with gladness and good humour, therein, O Brother Leo, consists perfect joy. And if we, constrained by hunger and cold and darkness, go on knocking and weeping

loudly, entreat him for the love of God to open the door and let us in, he will be even more enraged and say: 'These are importunate scoundrels, I will give them what they deserve!' and rush out with a knotted stick and, seizing us by our hoods, throw us down and roll us in the snow and beat us with all the knots of his stick: if we endure all these things patiently and with gladness, thinking of the sufferings of our blessed Lord, which we must bear for love of Him: O Brother Leo, write that therein consists perfect joy. And now listen to the conclusion, Brother Leo. Above all grace and all gifts of the Holy Spirit which Christ vouchsafes to His friends, is that of overcoming one's self, and for the love of Christ gladly bearing pain, insults, disgrace and hardship. For we cannot glory in any of the other gifts of God, as they are not ours but God's. Therefore the Apostle says: 'What hadst thou, that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as though thou hadst not received it?' [1 Cor. iv. 7]. But we may glory in the cross of tribulation and of affliction, for that is ours, wherefore the Apostle says: 'For God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ' to whom be honour and glory, world without end, Amen."

## IX

*How St. Francis taught Brother Leo to give him the responses at Matins, and how Brother Leo always said the contrary of what St. Francis told him.*

One day, at the beginning of the Order, St. Francis was with Brother Leo in a place where they had no books wherewith to say the divine office. When the hour of Matins came, St. Francis said to Brother Leo: "Beloved Brother, we have no breviary wherewith we could say Matins, but so that we may spend our time in praising God, I will speak and you shall answer as I will teach you. I will say: 'O Brother Francis, you did so much wrong and committed so many sins in the world that you deserve to go to hell.' And you, Brother Leo, will answer: 'That is indeed true, that you deserve to go to the very depths of hell.'"

And Brother Leo, with the simplicity of a dove, answered: "Willingly Father; begin then in God's name."

Then St. Francis began to say: "O Brother Francis, you did so much wrong and committed so many sins in the world, that you deserve to go to hell."

And Brother Leo answered: "God will do so much good through you that you will go to paradise."

St. Francis said: "Not so, Brother Leo, but when I will say: 'O Brother Francis, you have done such iniquitous things against God that you deserve to be accursed of God,' then you shall reply: 'Truly you deserve to be thrown among the damned.'"

And Brother Leo answered: "Willingly, Father."

Then St. Francis, weeping and sighing and beating his breast, said in a loud voice: "O Lord my God of heaven and earth, I have offended thee by so many iniquities and so many sins, that I fully deserve to be accursed by thee."

And Brother Leo answered: "God will make you so that among the blessed you will be singularly blessed."

St. Francis was amazed that Brother Leo should answer by saying the contrary of what he told him to say and reproved him with the words: "Why do you not answer as I tell you? I command you by holy obedience to make the responses as I teach them to you. I will say: 'O you bad Brother Francis, do you believe that God will have mercy on you, seeing that you have committed so many sins against the Father of mercy and the Lord of consolation that you are not worthy to find mercy?' And you, Brother Leo, my little lamb, you will answer: 'In no way are you worthy of mercy.'"

But then, when St. Francis said: "O you bad Brother Francis," etc., Brother Leo answered thus: "Our Heavenly Father, whose mercy is infinitely greater than your sins, will show you great mercy and will, in addition, give you much grace."

At this answer St. Francis, gently angered and patiently perturbed, said to Brother Leo: "How can you be so presumptuous as to act against holy obedience, and why have you said over and over again the contrary of what I bade you say?"

Brother Leo answered very humbly and reverently: "God knows, my father, that I intended every time to answer as you told me, but God makes me speak according to His will."

St. Francis wondered greatly, and said to Brother Leo: "I entreat you most lovingly to answer me this time as I tell you."

Brother Leo answered: "Say it, in the name of God, and most certainly I will answer this time as you wish."

And St. Francis said weeping: "O you bad brother Francis, do you think that God will have mercy on you?"

Brother Leo answered: "You will receive abundant grace from God, and He will exalt and glorify you in eternity, for the humble will be exalted—and I can speak no differently, for God is speaking through my lips."

And thus, in this contest of humility, with much weeping and much spiritual consolation, they kept their vigil until the day.

## X

*How Brother Masseo asked St. Francis why all the world was following him.*

Once St. Francis was staying at the hermitage of Portiuncula with Brother Masseo (20) da Marignano, who was a man of great saintliness and discretion and endowed with much grace in speaking of God, for which reasons St. Francis held him in great affection. One day, as St. Francis was returning from praying in the wood, as he was just coming out of it, the said Brother Masseo went to meet him, and wishing to test his humility, went to meet him and, assuming a jeering tone, asked: "Why you? Why you? Why you?"

St. Francis answered: "What do you mean by that?"

Brother Masseo said: "I want to know why you should be the man all the world is running after and why everybody seems to want to see you, to listen to you and to obey you? You are not a man of handsome presence, you have no great scholarship, you are not noble; so why should all the world run after you?"

Hearing this, St. Francis rejoiced in his spirit and, lifting his face to heaven, remained a long time with his mind uplifted to God; then, coming back to himself, he knelt down and rendered thanks and praise to God and with great fervour of spirit turned to Brother Masseo and said: "You want to know why I should be the one all the world is running after? This is given me by the eyes of the Highest God which look upon the good and the wicked in every

place. Because these most holy eyes could not find among the sinners one more vile, more miserable, more sinful than I, and because God could not find a viler creature on earth for the marvellous work which He intends to do, and because He has chosen me to confound the nobility, the greatness, the strength, the beauty and the wisdom of the world. And this He has done so that it may be recognized that all virtue and all good is of Him, and not of the creatures, and no man should glory in His presence, but 'he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord' [1 Cor. i, 31], whose is all honour and glory for ever and ever."

Then Brother Masseo, hearing so humble an answer uttered with such fervour, was afraid and understood that St. Francis was firmly rooted in true humility. Praised be Jesus Christ, Amen.

# XI

## *How St. Francis made Brother Masseo turn round and round, and how they went to Siena.*

One day St. Francis was going along the road with Brother Masseo, and the said brother was walking on ahead; then they came to a parting of the ways, where one road led to Siena, one to Florence and one to Arezzo. Brother Masseo asked: "Father, which road shall we take?"

St. Francis answered: "The one God wills us to take."

Brother Masseo said: "But how are we to know God's will?"

St. Francis said: "By the sign which I will show you. I command you by the merits of holy obedience that at this cross-roads, on the spot where you are standing, you should turn round and round as children do, and you shall not stop turning until I tell you."

Thereupon Brother Masseo began to turn round and round, and he turned so long that he fell to the ground several times owing to the dizziness that results in the head from turning in the same direction. But as St. Francis did not tell him to stop and he wanted to obey him faithfully, he got up and began to turn again.

In the end, when he was turning well and hard, St. Francis said: "Now stop and do not move."



And he stopped, and St. Francis asked him: "To what quarter are you turning your face?"

Brother Masseo answered: "Towards Siena."

St. Francis said: "That is the road that God wills us to take."

As they went along that road, Brother Masseo wondered greatly that St. Francis had made him do such a thing, behaving like a child, in full sight of the laymen passing by; nevertheless his reverence was such that he did not dare say anything about it to the holy father.

When St. Francis was approaching Siena, the inhabitants of the town heard that he was coming and went out to meet him. In their devotion they carried the Saint and his companion to the Bishop's palace, so that they did not need to put a foot to the ground. At that very hour some men of Siena were fighting, and two of them had already been killed. When St. Francis got there, he preached to them in so devout and saintly a fashion that they settled their differences in great unity and concord.

When the Bishop of Siena heard of the holy work St. Francis had done, he invited him to his house and entertained him most honourably that day and also the night. The following morning the Saint, who in his true humility sought only the glory of God, rose early with his companion and they left without the Bishop's knowledge.

This caused Brother Masseo to murmur to himself on his way. He said to himself: "What has this good man been doing again? First he makes me turn round and round like a child, and then he leaves the Bishop who did him so much honour, without a single good word or so much as a thank you!" And Brother Masseo thought that St. Francis had behaved in an unseemly manner.

But later, by divine inspiration, he thought better of it and, reproaching himself, he said in his heart: "Brother Masseo, you are too proud. Who are you to pass judgment on divine works? You deserve hell for your undiscerning pride. . . ."

And all the things that Brother Masseo was thinking in his own heart as he walked along were revealed by God to St. Francis. Therefore, calling the friar to him, he said:

"Hold fast to these things you have just been thinking, for they are good and useful, and inspired by God; but your first thoughts,

when you were murmuring within yourself, were blind, vain and proud, and they were sent you by the devil.”

Then Brother Masseo realized clearly that St. Francis knew the secrets of the human heart, and he understood that the spirit of divine wisdom directed the holy father in all his actions. Praise to Christ the Lord, Amen.

### XIII

*How St. Francis sent his companions to preach in different parts, while he went to another part with Brother Masseo.*

The wonderful servant and follower of Christ, our master St. Francis, wanted to conform himself to Christ in everything. According to the Gospel Our Lord sent His disciples two by two into all the towns and places where He Himself was going; therefore St. Francis, after having assembled twelve companions according to the example of Christ, sent them out, two by two, into the world to preach. In order to give them an example of true obedience, he was the first to go out, following the example of Christ, who began with actions before He taught. Therefore, having assigned other parts of the world to his companions, he took the road accompanied by Brother Masseo, towards the land of France [1217].

One day they arrived very hungry at a town and proceeded, according to the Rule, to beg their bread for the love of God. St. Francis went along one street, Brother Masseo along another. But as St. Francis was of despicable aspect and small of stature and therefore was taken for a poor, wretched little man by those who did not know him, he succeeded only in collecting a few mouthfuls and bits of dry bread. Brother Masseo, however, was a tall man of handsome presence, and therefore he was given a great deal, fine large pieces of bread and even whole loaves.

When they had finished begging, they met outside the town in a place where they could eat, where there was a beautiful fountain beside a fine, broad stone on which they each set out the alms they had collected. When St. Francis saw that the pieces of bread received by Brother Masseo were far better and larger than his own, he was overjoyed and said:

“O Brother Masseo, we are not worthy of so great a treasure.”

He repeated these words several times, and Brother Masseo said: "Dearest father, how can one speak of a treasure where there is such poverty and so great a lack of the things we need? Here is no tablecloth, no trencher, no bowl; no house, no table, no man or maid to serve us."

Then St. Francis said: "And that is what I call a great treasure, that there is not one thing prepared by human hands, but what there is has been prepared by divine providence, as we see by the bread we have collected, by our table of so beautiful a stone and the fountain so limpidly clear. Therefore I would have us pray God that He make us love with all our heart the treasure of Holy Poverty, who is so noble that God Himself becomes her servant."

When he had said these words, and they had prayed and taken bodily sustenance from those pieces of bread and the water from the fountain, they arose to continue their way to France. They came to a church, and St. Francis said to his companion: "Let us go into this church and adore the Lord." St. Francis went behind the altar and entered into prayer, and in that prayer he received such great favours of divine visitation that his soul was wholly inflamed with love of holy poverty; his face was flushed, his lips opened so that it seemed that he was throwing out flames of love.

And coming thus all glowing to his companion, he said: "Ah, ah, ah, Brother Masseo, give yourself to me!" This he said three times, and the third time St. Francis raised Brother Masseo into the air with his breath and threw him forward the length of a great spear. Brother Masseo was greatly amazed, and later he told his companions how, when St. Francis with his breath had lifted and propelled him, he had experienced such sweetness of spirit and consolation of the Holy Ghost that nothing he had known in his whole life could equal it.

And St. Francis said: "Dearest companion, let us now go to St. Peter and St. Paul and ask them to teach us and help us to possess the immeasurable treasure of holy poverty. . . ."

And they came to Rome, and entered into the church of St. Peter, and St. Francis knelt to pray in one corner of the church, and Brother Masseo in the other. . . . Then, filled with gladness, they both decided to return to the valley of Spoleto and leave their journeying to France. Praise be to Christ our Lord, Amen.

## XIV

*How St. Francis and his brethren were speaking of God,  
and Christ appeared to them.*

In the beginning of the Order, when St. Francis and his companions were assembled one day in a place, and talking about Christ, the Saint in the fervour of his spirit commanded one of them in the name of God to open his lips and speak of God as the Holy Spirit inspired him.

The friar obeyed the command and spoke most marvellously. St. Francis then imposed silence upon him and commanded another friar to speak, the which obeyed and discoursed on God with great subtlety, until St. Francis bade him be silent also. And he commanded a third to speak of God. And he likewise began to speak so profoundly of the divine mysteries that St. Francis knew without doubt that he, like the other two, spoke by the Holy Spirit. This was also demonstrated by an unmistakable sign, for as they were thus discoursing, Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared in their midst in the shape of a beautiful youth. Blessing them all, He filled them with such sweetness that they were rapt in ecstasy and lay as men dead, feeling nothing pertaining to this world.

When they then returned to themselves, St. Francis said to them: "My dearest brothers, let us thank God, who has seen fit to reveal the treasures of divine wisdom through the mouths of simpletons, for it is God who opens the mouths of the dumb and makes the tongues of the simple to speak most wisely." Praised be He, Amen.

## XV

*How St. Clare went to eat with St. Francis at  
St. Mary of the Angels.*

When St. Francis stayed at Assisi, he often visited St. Clare and gave her holy counsels. She had a great desire to eat with him once, and begged him many times to do so, but he would never grant her this consolation. St. Francis's companions, seeing this great

desire of St. Clare, said to him: "Father, it seems to us that this severity is not consistent with divine charity—that you should not concede so small a thing as to allow Sister Clare, a virgin so holy and beloved of God, to eat with you, especially when one considers that through your preaching she relinquished all the riches and pomps of the world. Truly, if she were to ask you for an even greater favour than this, you should accord it to her, your spiritual plant."

Then St. Francis answered: "Do you hold that I should grant her request?"

The companions said: "Yes, father, it is right that you should afford her this consolation."

St. Francis then said: "As you are of this opinion, I agree. But so that she should be consoled even more, I wish this meal to be taken at St. Mary of the Angels, seeing that she has been cloistered so long in San Damiano, it will please her to see St. Mary's again, the place where her hair was shorn and she became the bride of Jesus Christ. There we will eat together in the name of God."

When the ordained day arrived, St. Clare came out from her convent with one sister, and, accompanied by the companions of St. Francis, she arrived at St. Mary of the Angels. Devoutly she saluted the Blessed Virgin at her altar, before which she had been shorn and veiled, and then they took her to see the place until it was time to dine. In the meantime St. Francis had had the table prepared on the bare ground, as he was wont to do. And when it was time to dine, St. Francis and St. Clare sat down together, and one of the companions of St. Francis with the companion of St. Clare, and then all the other companions sat down at table with great humility.

At the first course, St. Francis began to speak of God with such suavity, so sublimely and so wonderfully that the abundance of divine grace descended on them and they were all rapt in God.

And while they were thus rapt with their eyes and their hands raised to Heaven, the people of Assisi and Bettona and the surrounding countryside saw St. Mary of the Angels, the monastery and the woods which then surrounded it, burning brightly, as though a great fire were blazing in the church, the house and the woods. Therefore the men of Assisi came running in great haste to put out the flames, believing firmly that something was on fire. But when

they arrived there they found nothing burning; they then went in and found St. Francis and St. Clare and all their company rapt in ecstatic contemplation, sitting around that humble board.

From this they understood that the fire had been divine and not material, and that God had caused it to appear miraculously to show and signify the fire of divine love which inflamed the souls of those holy monks and nuns, and they returned home with great consolation in their hearts and holy edification.

Then, after a long time, St. Francis and St. Clare and the others returned to themselves, and, feeling well comforted by the spiritual sustenance, they had little care of bodily nourishment. And so, when this blessed meal was over, St. Clare, fittingly accompanied, returned to San Damiano. The sisters were exceedingly glad to see her again, because they had been afraid that St. Francis had sent her to direct another convent, as he had already sent the holy Sister Agnes, her own sister, to rule as abbess over the convent of Monticelli at Florence. St. Francis had several times said to St. Clare: "Make yourself ready, in case it should be necessary for me to send you to another place." And she, as a true daughter of holy obedience, had replied: "Father, I am always ready to go wherever you may send me." And for this reason the sisters were very glad when they had her back again.

And from then on St. Clare remained in great consolation. (21)  
To the glory of Christ, Amen.

## XVI

*How St. Francis sent to St. Clare and Brother Silvester for advice whether it would be better for him to abide in prayer, or whether he should sometimes preach. The Sermon to the Birds.*

The humble servant of Christ, St. Francis, a short time after his conversion, when he had already united many companions and received them into the Order, began to ponder deeply and to doubt what it behoved him to do, namely, whether he should only remain in prayer, or whether he should sometimes preach. (22) He was greatly desirous of learning God's will in regard to this. And as his humility was such that he did not presume to find the answer by

himself or in his own meditations, he thought to discover the divine will through the meditations of others.

Therefore he called Brother Masseo and said: "Go to Sister Clare and ask her from me to pray devoutly with some of her most spiritually advanced companions that God may be pleased to show me what is better: that I should attend to preaching, or only to prayer. Then go to Brother Silvester and ask him the same."

The latter had been Messer Silvestro in the world, the same who had seen a golden cross proceeding from St. Francis's mouth, a cross as high as the heavens and reaching to the extremities of the earth. The devotion and saintliness of this Brother Silvester were such that whatever he prayed for was granted, and he often had conversation with God; therefore St. Francis was much devoted to him.

Brother Masseo went and, according to the bidding of St. Francis, carried his message first to St. Clare, and then to Brother Silvester, who, as soon as he had received it, immersed himself at once in prayer, and while he was praying was given the answer from God. He returned to Brother Masseo and said: "God says this, which you are to repeat to Francis: that God has not called him to this state for himself alone, but so that he should reap the fruit of souls, and that many may be saved through him."

When he had heard this, Brother Masseo returned to St. Clare to learn what she had obtained from God, and she told him that she and the other companions had been given the same divine answer that Brother Silvester had received. Brother Masseo returned with these tidings to St. Francis, and the father received him with great loving kindness, washing his feet and preparing a meal for him. And after he had eaten, St. Francis called Brother Masseo into the wood; there he knelt down before him, threw back his cowl, crossed his arms and asked: "What does the Lord Jesus Christ command me to do?"

Brother Masseo answered as follows: "To Brother Silvester, and also to Sister Clare and to her sisters, Christ has answered and revealed that it is His will for you to go out into the world and preach; for He has not chosen you for yourself alone, but also for the salvation of others."

Then St. Francis, having heard this answer and recognized the will of God, arose with great fervour and said: "Let us then go in

God's name." He took for his companions Brother Masseo and Brother Angelo, very holy men, and he set out filled with impetuous zeal without taking thought of road nor path. So they arrived at a fortified town called Savurgnano [Cannara]. St. Francis began to preach, after bidding the swallows who were singing to be silent until he had finished his sermon, and the swallows obeyed him. And there he preached with such eloquence that all the men and women of the town wanted to follow him in their devotion, abandoning their homesteads. But St. Francis would not allow this, and said to them: "Be not in such haste and do not leave, and I will tell you what you should do for the salvation of your souls."

And then he thought of founding the Third Order, for the universal salvation of all people. Leaving them much consoled and well disposed to penitence, he departed and came to a spot between Armano and Bevagno. As he went on in great fervour, he lifted his eyes and saw some trees by the roadside, and on them an almost infinite number of birds. St. Francis was amazed at this and said to his companions: "Wait for me on this road, and I will go and preach to my sisters the birds."

And going into the field, he began to preach to the birds which were sitting on the ground, and at once those that were in the trees came to him, and they all remained still until St. Francis had finished preaching to them, and even then they did not fly away until he had given them his blessing. According to the testimony of Brother Masseo and Brother Giacomo da Massa, they did not even move when St. Francis walked among them and touched them with his cloak.

The substance of St. Francis's sermon to the birds was as follows: "O birds, my sisters, you owe much to God your creator and you must praise Him always and everywhere, for He has given you freedom to fly wherever you like, and He has also given you double and triple raiment; and He has preserved your seed in the ark of Noah, so that your kind should not grow less on earth; and furthermore you must thank Him for the element of air which He has assigned to you. What is more, you neither sow nor reap, and God feeds you, and has given you the streams and the fountains to drink from, the mountains and the hills to shelter you, and the high trees whereon you can build your nests. And although you can



neither spin nor sew, God clothes you and your children. Therefore the Creator loves you dearly, as He has given you so many blessings, and so, my sisters, beware of the sin of ingratitude and be always eager to praise God."

When St. Francis said these words to them, all the birds began to open their beaks, stretch out their necks, unfold their wings and reverently bow their heads to the ground. So by their acts and their song they showed that the words of the holy father gave them very great joy. And St. Francis rejoiced with them and was glad and marvelled at the great multitude of the birds, and their beautiful diversity, and at their attentive and fearless behaviour. For these reasons he praised the Creator in them with great devotion.

Finally, when he had finished preaching to them, St. Francis made the sign of the cross over them and gave them leave to depart. Thereupon all the birds rose up together into the air with wonderful songs and then the flock divided itself into four parts, following the direction of the sign of the cross: one part flew to the east, the other to the west, the third to the south, the fourth to the north . . . thereby signifying that the preaching of Christ's Cross, renewed by St. Francis, would spread over the whole world through him and his brethren who, like unto the birds, possess nothing of their own in the world and commit their lives wholly to God's Providence. Praised be Jesus Christ, Amen.

#### XVIII

*How St. Francis summoned a general meeting of the Chapter and more than five thousand friars attended, and how he preached to them.*

The faithful servant of Christ, St. Francis, once held a Chapter at St. Mary of the Angels, and this meeting was attended by more than five thousand friars, and also by St. Dominic, head and founder of the Order of the Preaching Brothers; he was then going from Borgogna to Rome, with seven friars of his order.(23) The said Chapter was also attended by a Cardinal who was devoted to St. Francis, to whom the Saint had foretold that he would become Pope, and so it happened. [Cardinal Ugolino, later Gregory IX.]

The said Cardinal had come especially from Perugia, where the Court was, to Assisi, and every day he came to see St. Francis and his brethren; sometimes he sang the Mass, and sometimes he preached to the brethren in Chapter. . . . And marvelling that so great a multitude should be so orderly, he said with tears and great devotion: "This is the army of the knights of Christ!" In all this multitude one could not hear anyone indulging in idle talk or jests, but, wherever a company of friars assembled, they would either pray or say the office, or they would weep over their own sins and those of their benefactors, or discourse on the salvation of the soul. In that camp were roofs of willows and rush-mats in different shapes according to the different provinces, and for that reason it was called the camp of the trellises, or of the rush-mats. They bedded themselves on the earth, and those who had some covered it with a little straw; their pillows were stones or bits of wood. . . .

When the general Chapter was all assembled, the holy father of them all and minister general, St. Francis, propounded the word of God in great fervour of spirit and preached to them in a loud voice the words the Holy Ghost made him speak. For the text of his sermon he took these words:

"My sons, we have promised great things, but even greater have been promised to us by God. Let us observe what we have promised and hope steadfastly for what has been promised us. Brief are the delights of the world, but the pain that follows after them is perpetual. Small is the pain of this world, but the glory of the other life is infinite. . . ."

Preaching most devoutly on these words, he comforted the brethren and admonished them to obey and reverence Holy Mother Church, to persevere in fraternal charity, to pray God for the whole people, to have patience in the adversities of the world and observe temperance in prosperity, to keep themselves pure and chaste as angels, to live in peace and concord with God and men and with their own conscience, to love and observe holy poverty. And he said: "I command you by holy obedience, all of you who have congregated here, that not one of you should have a care of food or drink or of any thing necessary to the body, but that you should be intent only on praying and praising God. Leave all care of your body to Him, knowing that He has you in His especial care." And

they all received this commandment with a glad heart and a happy countenance. And when St. Francis had finished his sermon, they all sank to their knees to pray.

St. Dominic, who was present at all this, wondered exceedingly at this commandment of St. Francis and considered him injudicious, for he could not believe that such a multitude could support itself without care or thought of the needs of the body.

But our blessed shepherd Jesus Christ, to show how He cares for His sheep and what singular love He has for His poor, forthwith inspired the people of Perugia, Spoleto, Foligno, Spello and Assisi and other surrounding regions with the thought of bringing food and drink for the holy congregation. And lo! suddenly men arrived from the said places with mules, horses and carts, laden with bread and wine, beans and cheese and other good things to eat, thus purveying all the needs of the poor of Christ. Furthermore, they brought tablecloths and pitchers, goblets and other vessels to serve the needs of so great a multitude. And he who could bring the most or serve with the greatest care considered himself blessed. . . .

Therefore St. Dominic, seeing these things, recognized that divine Providence was working in them, and he admitted humbly within himself that he had misjudged St. Francis, thinking his command was injudicious and, kneeling down humbly before him, he confessed his error with great humility and added: "Truly, God has especial care of these poor holy men, and I did not know it. From now on, I promise, I will observe holy evangelical poverty, and in the name of God I curse all brothers of my Order who in that Order presume to keep property of their own."

## XIX

*How St. Francis went to Rieti for the cure of his eyes. The miracle of the vineyard.*

Once when St. Francis was suffering from a grave infirmity of the eyes, Messer Ugolino, the Cardinal protector of the Order, because of the great tenderness he felt towards him, wrote to St. Francis asking him to come to him at Rieti, where there were the best physicians of the eyes. When St. Francis received the Cardinal's

letter, he first went to St. Clare, the most devout spouse of Christ, at San Damiano, to give her some consolation and then go to the Cardinal. In the night following St. Francis's arrival there, his eyes grew so much worse that he could no longer see the light. As he was therefore unable to depart, St. Clare caused a cabin of reeds to be made for him, so that he might rest there. (There he stayed for fifty days.) But the pain of his infirmity was so great, beside the multitude of mice which were a very great nuisance to him, that St. Francis could find no rest, neither by day nor by night. And as he endured more of these pains and tribulations he began to ponder and to realize that they were a scourge of God for his sins. And he began to thank God with all his heart and with his lips, and he cried out in a loud voice, saying:

"My Lord, I am worthy of this and of worse ills. My Lord Jesus Christ, Thou good shepherd who hast shown us unworthy sinners Thy mercy by diverse pains and bodily anguish, grant grace and virtue to me, Thy little sheep, that through no infirmity, anguish or suffering I may be divided from Thee."

When he had uttered this prayer, a voice from heaven spoke to him thus: "Francis, answer Me. If the whole earth were gold, and all the seas and rivers and springs were balm, and all the mountains, hills and rocks were precious stones, and you were to find a treasure so far superior to these things as gold is superior to earth, balm to water and precious stones to mountains and rocks, and if this noble treasure were given you by this infirmity, should you not be content and well pleased?"

St. Francis answered: "Lord, I am not worthy of so precious a treasure." And God's voice said to him: "Rejoice, Francis, for this treasure is eternal life which I reserve for you, and from now on I invest you with it, and this infirmity and affliction is a pledge of that blessed treasure."

Thereupon St. Francis called his companion, rejoicing greatly at so glorious a promise, and said: "Let us go to the Cardinal." And after having comforted St. Clare with holy words and taken leave of her with great humility, he took the road to Rieti. When he got near the town, such a multitude of people came out to meet him that he did not want to go into it, but withdrew into a church (24) which lay at a distance of about two miles from the city. When the

citizens learnt that he was in that church, they hastened out to see him in such numbers that the vineyard of the church was quite spoiled and all the grapes were picked. The priest was deeply grieved at this, and repented that he had asked St. Francis to stay in his church.

When God revealed to St. Francis these thoughts in the heart of the priest, he sent for him and said: "Dearest father, how many measures of wine does this vineyard yield to you in a year, when it is at its best?"

The priest answered that it yielded twelve measures. St. Francis said: "I beg you, father, bear patiently with me and allow me to stay here a few days, for I find much rest here, and allow everybody to pick grapes from your vineyard for the love of God and of the poor little man that I am, and I promise you in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ that it will give you a yearly yield of twenty measures."

And this St. Francis did in return for staying there, because of the great uplifting of souls which was manifest in the people who came, many of whom departed inebriated with divine love and abandoned the world.

The priest, relying on St. Francis's promise, gave all who came to him the freedom of the vineyard. Marvellous to relate! The vineyard was totally despoiled, so that there barely remained some small bunches of grapes. The time of vintage came and the priest picked those few little bunches, put them in the vat and pressed them, and, as St. Francis had promised, he obtained twenty measures of the best wine.

In this miracle we are given manifestly to understand that, just as the despoiled vineyard yielded an abundance of wine by the merits of St. Francis, so the Christian people, barren of virtue through sin, through the merits and the doctrine of St. Francis, often abounds in the good fruits of penitence. Praised be Jesus Christ, Amen.

## XXI

### *How St. Francis converted the ferocious wolf of Gubbio.*

At the time when St. Francis was staying in the city of Gubbio there appeared an enormous, terrible and ferocious wolf who not only devoured animals, but even men, so that all the citizens lived

in great fear, for the wolf often came quite close to the city, and when they went outside the walls they armed themselves as if they were going to battle. Yet even so they could not defend themselves against him if they happened to be alone when they met him. Through fear of this wolf they got to the point that nobody was bold enough to venture outside the city.

For this reason St. Francis, in his compassion for the men of the city, decided to go outside to that wolf, although all the citizens advised him not to do so. And signing himself with the sign of the Holy Cross, he went out of the city with his companions, setting all his trust in God. And as the others were afraid to go any further, St. Francis alone took the road towards the place where the wolf was.

Thereupon, seeing so many citizens who had come to witness the miracle, the said wolf bounded towards St. Francis with his mouth open. St. Francis approached him and made the sign of the cross over him, saying: "Come hither, Brother Wolf: I command you in the name of Christ to hurt no one, neither me nor anyone else."

Marvellous to relate; as soon as St. Francis had made the sign of the cross, the terrible wolf closed his mouth and stopped running, and when the Saint had uttered the command, he came up as gently as a lamb and lay down at St. Francis's feet.

Then St. Francis spoke to him as follows: "Brother Wolf, you do great damage in these parts, and you have committed very evil deeds, destroying and killing God's creatures without His permission, and you have not only slain and devoured beasts, but you have had the temerity to kill men who are made in the image of God. For this reason you deserve to be put to death, as the robber and wicked homicide you are. And all the people cry out and murmur against you, and the whole of this country is your enemy. But I, Brother Wolf, wish to make peace between you and them; provided you offend no more they will forgive you all your past offences and neither men nor dogs will persecute you any more."

When St. Francis had uttered these words, the wolf showed by the movements of his body, his tail and his ears and by inclining his head that he accepted what the Saint had said and that he would observe it. Then St. Francis said: "Brother Wolf, as you are pleased to make and to hold this peace, I promise that I will see that you are provided for as long as you live by the men of this town, so that

you shall never go hungry, for I know well that hunger made you do all this evil. But when I obtain this grace for you, I want you, Brother Wolf, to promise me that you will harm no man and no animal; will you promise me this?"

And the wolf, by bowing his head, signified clearly that he promised. And St. Francis said: "Brother Wolf, I want you to confirm this promise, so that I can place my trust in it." And St. Francis stretched out his hand to receive this confirmation, and the wolf raised his front paw and laid it submissively on to the Saint's hand, thus confirming his promise as best he could.

Then St. Francis said: "Brother Wolf, I now command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come with me in all confidence, and we will go and make this peace in God's name." The wolf obediently went with him, gentle as a lamb. The citizens, seeing this, were greatly amazed. Immediately the news spread all over the town, wherefore all the people, big and small, men and women, old and young, hurried to the market-place to see the wolf with St. Francis. As all the people were assembled there, St. Francis arose and preached to them. . . . And at the end of his sermon the Saint said: "Listen, my brothers. Brother Wolf, who is here before you, has promised me and confirmed his word to make peace with you and not to offend you in anything ever again, if you promise to provide him with the necessary food every day, and I will stand bail for him that he will truly observe his pact with you."

Then all the people with one voice promised to feed the wolf from then on. . . .

The said wolf lived two years in Gubbio, and went tamely into the houses from door to door, without doing any harm to anyone or having any harm done to him. The people fed him courteously, and as he went through the town and into the houses not a single dog barked at him. At the end of two years Brother Wolf died of old age, and the citizens mourned him deeply, for, seeing him pass so gently through the town, they had been reminded of the virtue and saintliness of St. Francis. Praise be to Christ, Amen.

## XXII

*How St. Francis tamed the turtle-doves that had been given him.*

One day a youth had caught many turtle-doves and was going to sell them. St. Francis met him, and as he always had a singular pity for all gentle beasts, he looked pitifully at the doves and said to the young man: "O good youth, I beg you give them to me, so that these innocent birds, to whom Holy Scriptures compare the souls that are chaste, humble and faithful, should not fall into the hands of cruel men who would slaughter them."

And immediately the youth, inspired by God, gave all the birds to St. Francis, who took them into his lap and began to talk to them very gently, saying: "O my sisters, you simple, innocent and chaste turtle-doves, why do you let yourselves be caught? But see, I will deliver you from death and make nests for you, so that you can be fruitful and multiply according to the commandment of your Creator." And St. Francis went and made nests for all of them. And the doves used them, laid eggs and hatched them under the eyes of the friars; and they lived so tamely with St. Francis and all the other brothers that one could have taken them for chickens raised by their hands. And they never flew away, unless St. Francis blessed them and gave them leave to go. And to the youth who had given them to him, St. Francis said: "My son, you will yet be a brother of this Order, graciously serving Jesus Christ." And so it happened; the said youth became a friar and lived in the Order with great saintliness. Praise be to Christ, Amen.

## XXIII

*How St. Francis freed a friar from the Devil.*

Once when St. Francis was praying in the hermitage of Portiuncula, he was vouchsafed a vision in which he saw the whole place surrounded and besieged by demons, as by a great army. But not one of them could penetrate inside the place, because the brothers there were of such saintliness that they could find none through whom they might enter. But as they persevered, one of those brothers



quarrelled with another and planned in his heart how he might accuse the other and be revenged on him. Therefore, as this brother was harbouring this wicked thought, the devil found the door open and entered into the house, and set himself upon that brother's neck.

The compassionate and solicitous shepherd who ever watched over his flocks saw that the wolf had come in to devour one of his lambs, and forthwith he sent for that brother. And he commanded him instantly to confess the poisonous hatred he had conceived against his neighbour, for which reason he had fallen into the hands of the enemy. Terrified at seeing his secret thoughts known by the holy father, he revealed all his venom and rancour and admitted his sin, pleading humbly for a merciful penance. Then he received absolution from his sin, and when he had received penance the devil immediately got him gone before St. Francis.

And the friar, having thus been freed from the clutches of the cruel beast by the loving kindness of the good shepherd, gave thanks to God and returned corrected and chastened to the flock of that holy shepherd where he lived from then on in great sanctity. Praise be to Christ, Amen.

#### XXIV

*How St. Francis went over the sea to preach the Christian faith to the Soldan and to the Saracens.*

St. Francis, instigated by his zeal for the faith of Christ and by his desire for martyrdom, once crossed the sea with twelve of his most holy companions in order to go straight before the Soldan of Babylon. (25) And they came to a country of the Saracens where the passes were guarded by certain men of such cruelty that they let no Christian who passed there escape alive; but it pleased God that they did not lose their lives, but they were taken, beaten and bound and led before the Soldan.

When he stood before him, St. Francis was inspired by the Holy Spirit and preached divinely on the faith of Christ and was ready to go through the fire for it. Therefore the Soldan became very devoted to him, as well as for the contempt of the world he saw in him, seeing that he would not accept any gifts despite his great poverty,

and for the zeal of martyrdom he saw in him. From that time on the Soldan liked to listen to him and prayed him to return often, and he gave him and his companions permission to preach wherever they pleased. And he gave them a token which would protect them from being offended by any man.

When he had received this licence, St. Francis sent his selected companions, always two and two together, to preach the Christian faith in divers parts of the country of the Saracens. But finally, seeing that he could do no more good in these parts, he was inspired by God to return among the faithful again with his companions. When he had called them all together, he returned to the Soldan and took leave of him. Then the Soldan said:

“Brother Francis, I would willingly embrace the faith of Christ, but I am afraid to do it now, for if the others were to hear of it they would kill me and you and all your companions. And seeing that you can still do much good in the world, and that I have to take decisions on certain very weighty matters, I do not want thus to bring about my own and your death, but instruct me how I can save myself, and I am ready to do what you bid me.”

Then St. Francis said: “Lord, I will now take leave of you, but when I have returned to my own country, and have gone to Heaven by the grace of God, after my death I will send you two of my friars from whom you shall receive the baptism of Christ, and you will be saved, as my Lord Jesus Christ has revealed to me. . . .”

And the Soldan promised that it should be so. Then St. Francis went home with the venerable college of his holy companions, and some years later St. Francis suffered corporal death and gave back his soul to God. And the Soldan fell sick and, remembering the promise of St. Francis, had guards posted at certain passes, ordering them, should they see two friars in the habit of St. Francis, to bring them before him without delay. At that time St. Francis appeared to two friars and commanded them to go to the Soldan forthwith and to work his salvation, as he had promised him. The said brothers broke up at once and, after they had crossed the sea, they were taken before the Soldan by the said guards. When the Soldan saw them, he rejoiced greatly and said: “Now I truly know that God has sent His servants to me for my salvation, according to the promise St. Francis made me by divine revelation.”

When he had received instruction in the Christian faith and holy baptism from the said friars, he died of his sickness, regenerated in Christ, and his soul was saved through the merits and works of St. Francis. (26) To the praise of our blessed Lord, Amen.

## XXV

*How St. Francis healed a leper in body and soul.*

The true disciple of Christ, our father St. Francis, while he lived this miserable life, strove with all his might to follow Christ, the perfect teacher. Therefore it happened several times by divine operation that those whose body he healed were healed in spirit by God in the same hour, as we read of Christ. And for this reason he not only gladly tended the lepers, but had also ordered that the brethren of his Order, wherever they happened to be, should serve the lepers (27) for the love of Christ, who for our sakes willed to be accounted a leper.

It happened that in a place near that in which St. Francis then dwelt, the brothers were serving in a hospital of lepers and other sick men; among these was a leper so impatient, unbearable and arrogant that everybody was sure that he was possessed by the devil, and this was the case. He not only abused everyone who tended him with words and blows most shamefully, but what was worse, he blasphemed most foully against our blessed Lord Jesus Christ and His most holy mother, the Virgin Mary, so that nobody could be found who wanted to serve him. . . . In the end they decided to abandon the said leper to his own devices. But they did not want to do so before they had reported to St. Francis, who was then living in a hermitage nearby. And when this had been reported to him, St. Francis went to see this perverse leper, and when he came to him, he greeted him with the words: "God give you peace, my dearest brother." Thereupon the leper replied rudely: "And what peace could I get from God, who has taken my peace and all I had from me, and made me rot and stink?" St. Francis said: "Have patience, for the infirmities of the body are given us by God in this world for the salvation of our souls. They are of great merit, if we endure them with patience."

The sick man answered: "And how could I endure the incessant pain which afflicts me day and night patiently? and I am not only afflicted by my infirmity, but even worse by the friars you gave me to look after me, who do not tend me as they should."

Then St. Francis, understanding by divine revelation that this leper was possessed by an evil spirit, entered into prayer and prayed God most devoutly for him. And when he had ended his prayer, he returned to him and said: "My son, I will tend you myself, as you are not satisfied with the others." "I am content," said the leper, "but what could you do for me more than they do?" St. Francis answered: "I will do whatever you wish."

The leper said: "I want you to wash me all over, for I stink so that I cannot bear myself."

St. Francis immediately caused water to be heated with many fragrant herbs, then he undressed the leper and began to wash him with his hands, and another friar poured water over him; and, by a divine miracle, wherever St. Francis touched him with his holy hands, the leprosy vanished and healthy flesh remained. And as the flesh began to be healed, so also the soul began to be healed, for when the leper saw that he was being cured, he began to feel great compunction and repentance for his sins and to weep bitterly, so that, as the body was outwardly cleansed of the leprosy by laving it with water, so the soul was inwardly purified of sin by contrition and tears. And when he was completely healed in body and soul, he humbly confessed his sins and said, weeping aloud: "Woe unto me, for I am worthy of hell for the insults and injuries I have given the brothers, and for the impatience and blasphemy I have offered to God!"

For a fortnight he continued to weep bitterly for his sins and to implore God to be merciful to him, and he made a general confession to the priest.

And St. Francis, seeing this miracle that God had wrought through his hands, thanked the Lord and departed from that place, going to a far distance from there, for in his humility he desired to flee from all human glory, and in all his works he only sought the honour and glory of God and never his own.

Then it pleased God that the said leper, healed in body and soul, after a fortnight of penitence sickened of another disease and, armed

with the sacraments of the Church, died in a saintly manner. And his soul, going to paradise, appeared in the air to St. Francis, who was praying in a wood . . . and St. Francis received great consolation therefrom.

## XXVI a

*How three robbers were converted and became brethren  
of St. Francis.*

At that time three notorious robbers were in the district called Monte Casale, and they perpetrated many evil deeds in the neighbourhood. One day they came to the House of the brethren and asked the guardian, Brother Angelo, to give them some food.

The guardian answered them as follows, reproving them harshly: "You robbers and cruel murderers, you are not ashamed to rob the fruit of other men's labours and now you would dare to devour the very alms given to the servants of God! You are not worthy that the earth should carry you, for you have no reverence, neither for men nor for God who created you. Get away to your business, and do not show yourselves again here!" Thereupon they went away perturbed and in high dudgeon.

And then St. Francis returned with a bag full of bread and a vessel of wine, which had been given to him and his companion outside.

When the guardian told him how he had chased away the robbers, St. Francis reprimanded him severely, saying: "You have behaved in a cruel manner, and sinners are brought back to God far better by kindness than by cruel reproofs; therefore our Lord Jesus Christ, whose Gospel we have vowed to observe, says that the whole have no need of a physician, only the infirm, and that He had not come to call the just, but to call the sinners to repentance, and for that reason He would often eat with them. Because of this thing, then, which you have done against charity and against the Holy Gospel of Christ, I command you by holy obedience that you immediately take this bag of bread I have been given, and this vessel of wine, and follow them carefully over the hills and valleys until you find them, and offer them all this bread and wine as a gift from me, and then kneel down before them and confess to them the sin of your

cruelty with humility. Then entreat them in my name to do no more ill, but to fear God and not offend their neighbour, and if they will do that, I promise to provide for their needs and to give them food and drink continually. And when you have told them that, return here in all humility.”

While the said guardian was on his way to carry out the command of St. Francis, the holy father entered into prayer and entreated the Lord to soften the hearts of those robbers and convert them to penitence. The obedient guardian arrived before them and presented the bread and the wine to them, doing and saying as St. Francis had bidden him.

And as it pleased God, while these robbers were consuming the alms of St. Francis, they began to say to each other: “Woe to us miserable unfortunate men, what terrible torments await us in hell . . . Truly, these friars are saints of God, who deserve to enter Paradise. . . .” These and similar words were spoken by one of them, and the other two said: “For sure, you are speaking the truth, but look, what are we to do?”

“Let us go,” said he, “to St. Francis, and if he gives us hope that we may find mercy with God for our sins, let us do what he commands, then we can free and save our souls from the torments of hell.”

The others were pleased with this advice, and so they agreed all three and came in haste to St. Francis and said to him: “Father, because of the many and terrible sins that we have committed, we do not think we can find mercy with God; but if you have any hope that God would receive us mercifully, see, we are ready to do what you tell us and to do penitence with you.”

Then St. Francis, receiving them charitably and with loving kindness, comforted them with many examples and assured them of the infinite mercy of God, saying that if we had unlimited sins, God’s mercy would still be greater, and quoting the Gospel; and he told them how the Apostle, St. Paul, had said: “Christ, the blessed One, came into the world to save sinners.” And by these words and similar admonitions the three robbers were moved to renounce the devil and all his works, and St. Francis received them into the Order, and they began to do great penitence.

## XXVI b

*A vision of Purgatory on Earth.*

Two of those brothers did not live long after their conversion, and entered into Paradise. But the third, surviving them, and thinking of his sins, gave himself up to doing great penitence for fifteen years continually. . . . During that time St. Francis passed on from this miserable life.

When this man had continued his severe penitence for many years it happened that one night, after Matins, he was overcome by so strong a temptation to sleep that he could not resist and keep his vigil as usual. At last . . . he went to his bed to sleep, and suddenly, as he had laid down his head, he was rapt up and carried away in spirit onto a high mountain. Beside it was a deep chasm, in which here and there sharp rocks and pointed stones and uneven cliffs jutted out, so that it was a fearful thing to look down into that chasm. And the angel who was leading that friar pushed him and hurled him down into the precipice, and, turning over and over from rock to rock and stone to stone, he at last fell to the bottom of the chasm with all his limbs crushed and broken, as it seemed to him. And as he lay thus injured, on the ground, his guide said to him: "Get up, for you have still a long way to go!"

The friar answered: "You seem to me to be an unwise and cruel man, for you see me lying here at the point of death by the fall you caused me, and now you tell me to get up!" Then the angel came close to him and touched him, and all his limbs were whole and he was healed. Then he showed him a great plain full of sharp and cutting stones and of thorns and thistles, and he told him that he must walk over that plain with bare feet until he reached the end, where he saw a glowing furnace, and he must enter into it. . . . And when the friar had traversed that plain in great anguish and pain, the angel said to him: "Enter into that furnace, for so you must do." And he answered: "Woe is me, what a cruel guide you are! You see me on the point of death after passing over that terrible plain, and now to rest me you tell me to go into that glowing furnace!" And looking around him, he saw round the furnace many demons

with iron prongs in their hands, and, as he hesitated to enter, they pushed him in suddenly with their prongs.

When he had entered into the furnace he looked round and saw one who had been his godfather who was all in flames, and he asked him: "O my poor godfather, how did you get here?" And he answered: "Come a little further, and you will find your godmother, my wife, and she will tell you the reason of our damnation." The friar went a little further, and there he saw his said godmother burning brightly, surrounded by a measure of grain that was on fire. He asked her: "O my unfortunate and miserable godmother, how did you come to such cruel torments?" And she answered: "At the time of the great famine, which St. Francis had foretold, my husband and I falsified the measures of grain and corn we sold, and for that reason I am burning enclosed in this measure."<sup>1</sup>

When she had said these words, the angel who led the friar pushed him outside the furnace and said to him: "Prepare yourself for a terrible journey which you must now undertake!" And the friar complained and said: "O you hard guide, have you no compassion for me? You see that I have been almost burnt to death in that furnace, and now you want to take me on a terrible journey!" Then the angel touched him and made him whole and strong, and then he led him to a bridge which could not be passed without great danger, for it was very frail and narrow and exceedingly slippery, and below it flowed a terrible river full of snakes, dragons and scorpions, which threw out a horrible stench. And the angel said: "Pass over this bridge, for you must cross over it at all costs." And he answered: "And how will I be able to cross it without falling into that fearful river?" The angel said: "Follow me and put your foot where you see me put mine, and so you will cross over safely."

So the friar followed the angel as he had told him, until he came to the middle of the bridge, and when he was there the angel flew away and, leaving him, alighted on a high mountain very far beyond the bridge. He gazed at the place to which the angel had flown, but, staying behind without a guide and looking down, he saw those terrible beasts thrusting their heads out of the water and opening their mouths, ready to devour him if he should fall. He was so afraid that he did not know what to do or what to say, for

<sup>1</sup> This episode is added by the Italian translator.



he could neither turn back nor go forward. Then, seeing himself in such tribulation with no other refuge than God, he bent down and embraced the bridge, and with all his heart and with tears, he recommended himself to God, entreating Him in His most holy mercy to succour him. And when he had prayed, it seemed to him that he was beginning to put on wings, and therefore he waited with great joy for them to grow so that he might fly away from that bridge to the place where the angel had alighted. . . . But as he did not wait for them to grow perfectly, he fell back on to the bridge and his wings fell off. . . . And it seemed to him that he had waited a hundred and fifty years, or more. In the end he made a supreme effort and lifted himself into the air, and he flew up to the place where the angel had alighted.

And he knocked at the door of the palace in which the angel was, and the porter asked him: "Who are you that have come here?" The friar said: "I am a Brother Minor." The porter replied: "Wait for me, I will go and fetch St. Francis to know whether he recognizes you." While he went to seek St. Francis, the friar began to look round at the marvellous walls of that palace, and they seemed to him to be translucent with light, so that he could see distinctly the choirs of saints within and all that was happening there.

And as he was gazing in amazement, St. Francis appeared and Brother Bernard and Brother Giles, and behind St. Francis such a multitude of holy men and women who had followed the example of his life that they seemed innumerable. When St. Francis had come to him, he said to the porter: "Let him come in, for he is one of my brothers." As soon as he had entered, he experienced such sweetness and consolation that he forgot all the tribulations he had suffered, as though they had never been. And then St. Francis, leading him into the palace, showed him many marvellous things and said to him: "My son, now you must return to the world and stay there seven days, in which you must prepare yourself with great diligence and devotion, for after seven days I shall come for you, and you will be with me in this abode of the blessed. . . ."

When the friar returned to himself and became conscious, the brethren were ringing for Prime; so he had been rapt in that vision only from Matins to Prime, although it seemed to him that it had lasted many years. And when he had related to his guardian all he

had seen in due manner, within seven days he became feverish, and on the eighth day St. Francis, as he had promised, came for him with a great multitude of glorious saints, and led his soul to the blessed kingdom of life eternal. Praised be Christ, Amen.

## XXVII

*How, when St. Francis preached at Bologna, many were converted to do penitence, and how Brother Riccieri was comforted in his temptations.*

Once, when St. Francis came to the city of Bologna [summer 1222] (28) all the inhabitants ran out to see him, and the crowd was so great that he could only reach the square with difficulty, for it was filled with men and women and students. St. Francis mounted on to a raised place in the middle and began to preach, as the Holy Spirit inspired him, and he spoke such marvellous things that it seemed more like the preaching of an angel than of a man. And his celestial words were like pointed arrows that pierced the hearts of all who heard them, so that a great multitude of men and women were converted to repentance by this sermon.

Among them were two young noblemen, students from the March of Ancona; one was called Pellegrino [of the House of Falerone], the other Riccieri [of Muccia]. These two, touched to the heart by divine inspiration, through the said sermon, came to St. Francis, saying that they had no other desire than to abandon the world and join his brethren. Then Francis, knowing by revelation that these two had been sent by God and that they would lead a good life in the Order, and considering their great fervour, received them joyfully, saying to them: "You, Pellegrino, will walk the path of humility in the Order! And you, Brother Riccieri, will serve the brethren."

And so it happened, for Brother Pellegrino never wished to take orders, but to remain a layman, although he was very lettered and versed in canon law; through which humility he arrived at great perfection of virtue, so much so that Brother Bernard, St. Francis's first-born, said of him that he was one of the most perfect friars in the world. And in the end the said Brother Pellegrino, filled with

virtue, passed from this life to the life eternal, and many miracles took place before his death and after.

And the said Brother Riccieri devoutly and faithfully served the brethren, living in great sanctity and humility, and he became very familiar with St. Francis, and the Saint revealed many secrets to him. And having become minister of the province of the March of Ancona, he ruled it for a long time with great peace and wisdom. After some time, God allowed a terrible temptation to arise in his soul, being deeply troubled and anguished by it, he mortified himself with fasts, discipline, tears and orisons by day and by night and yet he could not drive away that temptation, and often he was in great despair, for many times he believed himself forsaken by God.

While he was thus despairing, he decided as a last remedy to go to St. Francis, saying to himself: "If St. Francis looks at me kindly and shows me the familiarity he used to, then I will believe that God will still take pity on me, but if he does not, then I will know by that sign that I am forsaken by God."

So he set out and went to St. Francis, who at that time was lying gravely sick at the palace of the Bishop of Assisi; and God revealed to the Saint all that concerned the temptation and the despair of that friar, as well as his purpose and his coming. And instantly St. Francis called Brother Leo and Brother Masseo and said to them: "Go quickly to meet my dearest son, Brother Riccieri, and embrace him for me, and salute him and tell him that among all the friars that are in the world I cherish him especially."

And they went out and met Brother Riccieri on the road, and they embraced him and told him what St. Francis had bidden them to say. Through this such sweetness of consolation flooded his soul that he was almost beside himself, and thanking God with all his heart, he went on and came to the place where St. Francis was lying sick.

And although St. Francis was grievously ill, nevertheless when he heard Brother Riccieri coming, he got up and went to meet him and embraced him most lovingly, saying: "My dearest son, Brother Riccieri, among all the friars that are in the world I cherish you especially!" And having said this, he signed Brother Riccieri's forehead with the sign of the Cross and kissed him on that spot, and then said: "My dearest son, God has allowed you to suffer that

temptation for your great gain and merit, but if you no longer desire that gain, you need not have it!"

Marvellous to relate, as soon as St. Francis had uttered these words, every temptation was suddenly taken from him, as though he had never experienced one in his life, and he remained wholly comforted. Praise be to Christ, (29) Amen.

## XXX

*How St. Francis and Brother Ruffino preached naked at Assisi.*

The said Brother Ruffino, by incessant contemplation, had become so absorbed in God that he was almost insensible and speechless, and he spoke but very rarely; besides, he had neither the grace, the fire nor the eloquence of a preacher. Nevertheless St. Francis one day ordered him to go to Assisi and preach to the people as God should inspire him. Thereupon Brother Ruffino replied: "Reverend Father, I beg you to excuse me and not to send me there, for, as you know, I have not the grace of preaching, and I am simple and ignorant."

Then St. Francis said: "Because you have not obeyed me at once, I order you by holy obedience to go naked, with nothing on but your breeches, to Assisi, and enter a church, and thus naked preach to the people." At this command Brother Ruffino stripped himself, went to Assisi and entered a church, and preached thus naked to the people. Thereat the boys and the men began to laugh, and they said: "Now look, they do so much penance that they lose their wits!"

Meanwhile St. Francis, thinking over Brother Ruffino's prompt obedience, and that he was one of the first gentlemen of Assisi, and what a harsh order he had given him, began to reproach himself thus: "Where do you get such presumption, son of Peter Bernardone, wretched little man, as to order Brother Ruffino, who is the first gentleman of Assisi, to go and preach to the people naked like a madman? By God, you shall try out yourself what you command to others."

And at once, in great fervour of spirit, he stripped himself naked in like manner and went to Assisi, taking with him Brother Leo

(who was keeping a strict hold on his thoughts)<sup>1</sup> so that he should carry his own habit and that of Brother Ruffino. And when the Assisians saw him thus, they jeered at him, thinking that he and Brother Ruffino had lost their wits through too much penance. St. Francis entered into the church, where Brother Ruffino was just preaching these words: "O dearest brothers, flee the world, put away sin, give back the goods of others if you want to escape hell; observe the commandments of God, loving the Lord and your neighbours, if you want to go to heaven; and do penance, if you want to possess the kingdom of heaven."

Then St. Francis, naked as he was, went up onto the pulpit and he began to preach so marvellously on the contempt of the world, on holy penitence, on voluntary poverty, on the longing for the celestial kingdom, and on the nakedness and shame of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ that all those who heard the sermon, men and women in great multitudes, began to weep most bitterly with incredible devotion and contrition. And not only here, but throughout the whole of Assisi, there was such weeping for the Passion of Christ that nothing similar had ever been seen.

And while the people were thus edified and consoled by the act of St. Francis and Brother Ruffino, St. Francis helped Brother Ruffino into his habit and put on his own again, and so they returned to the hermitage of Portiuncula, praising and glorifying God who had given them the strength to overcome themselves out of contempt for self, and to edify the little sheep of Christ with a good example, showing how the world is to be despised. And on that day the devotion of the people towards them increased so greatly that everyone who could touch the hem of their garment considered himself blessed. Praised be Christ, the Blessed One, Amen.

### XXXII

*How Brother Masseo obtained from the blessed Lord the perfect virtue of humility.*

The first companions of St. Francis strove with all their might to be poor in earthly goods and rich in virtues, by which one can

<sup>1</sup> This interpolation *strictissime cogitans* is only in the Latin original. See note (30).

obtain the true wealth of heavenly and eternal riches. One day it happened that they were gathered together and talking of God, and one of them told them this example: "Once there was a man who was a great friend of God and possessed much grace of active and contemplative life, and also a so excessive and deep humility that he considered himself the greatest of sinners; this humility sanctified him and confirmed him in the state of grace, and made him continually increase in virtue and in God's gifts, and never allowed him to fall into sin."

When Brother Masseo heard such marvellous things said of humility, and knowing that it was a treasure of eternal life, he began to be so inflamed with love and desire for this virtue of humility that, raising his eyes to heaven in great fervour, he made a vow and firm resolve never to rejoice again in this world until he should feel the perfection of this virtue in his soul. From then on he remained almost continually locked up in his cell, mortifying himself with fasts, vigils, orisons and bitter tears before the Lord, so as to obtain from Him this virtue without which he considered himself worthy of hell, and which had been so abundantly given to that friend of God he had heard about.

When Brother Masseo had been in this state for many days, it happened that one day he went into the wood and in fervour of spirit he roamed around, shedding abundant tears, sighing and moaning, and imploring God with fervent desire to give him this divine virtue. Because God willingly grants the prayers of humble and contrite hearts, while Brother Masseo was thus praying, a voice came from heaven and called him twice: "Brother Masseo! Brother Masseo!"

And he, knowing by the spirit that this was the voice of Christ, answered thus: "My Lord, my Lord!" And Christ said to him: "What will you give to have this grace you ask?" And Brother Masseo answered: "Lord, I will give the eyes of my head." Christ said to him: "But I will that you should have the grace and keep your eyes."

And having said this, the voice ceased, and Brother Masseo remained filled with such grace of the desired virtue of humility and with the light of God, that from then on he was always in a state of jubilation; and sometimes, when he prayed, he would keep up

a monotonous sound of jubilation like the deep cooing of a turtle-dove, "uh! uh! uh!" and with a happy countenance and a joyful heart he would remain thus in contemplation, and as he had now become profoundly humble, he considered himself to be less than any man in the world. When Brother Jacopo da Falerone asked him why, in his song of jubilation, he never changed his tone, he replied very happily that if we find all contentment in a thing, there was no need to change a note. Praised be Jesus Christ.

## XXXIII

*How St. Clare, at the command of the Pope, blessed the bread on the table, and how the cross appeared on each loaf.*

St. Clare, that most devout disciple of the Cross of Christ and noble plant of St. Francis, was of such saintliness that not only the Bishops and the Cardinals, but even the Pope, desired, with great affection, to see her, and the latter often visited her in person. Once when the holy father had come to her convent to hear her speak of celestial and divine things, (31) and while they were together, conversing on divine topics, St. Clare ordered the tables to be prepared and the loaves laid on them, for the holy father to bless them. Therefore, when their spiritual conversation was over, St. Clare knelt down with great reverence and begged him to be pleased to bless the bread laid on the table.

The holy father said: "Most faithful Sister Clare, I wish you yourself to bless this bread and make over it the sign of the Cross of Christ, to whom you have given yourself entirely."

And St. Clare said: "Most holy father, excuse me, for I would deserve the severest reproof if, in front of the Vicar of Christ, I, who am only a poor little female, would presume to give this blessing."

And the Pope answered: "So that this may not be reckoned as presumption, but as a work of obedience, I command you to make the sign of the Cross over this bread and to bless it in the name of God."

Thereupon St. Clare, as a true daughter of obedience, blessed the bread most devoutly with the sign of the holy Cross. And, marvellous to relate, instantly there appeared on every loaf the sign

of the Cross most beautifully impressed. Then a part of the bread was eaten, and a part kept because of the miracle. And the holy father, having seen the said miracle, took of the said bread and, thanking God, departed, leaving St. Clare with his benediction.

At that time there dwelt at the convent Sister Ortolana, the mother of St. Clare, and Sister Agnes, her bodily sister, both of them, like St. Clare, full of virtues and of the Holy Spirit, and with them many other saintly nuns. St. Francis sent many sick people to them, (32) and they, with their prayers and the sign of the Cross, gave them back their health. Praised be Christ, Amen.

## XXXIV

*How St. Louis, the King of France, came to visit Brother Giles, and how they understood each other without speaking.*



St. Louis, the King of France, went on a pilgrimage to the holy places of the world, and when he heard of the celebrated sanctity of Brother Giles, who had been one of St. Francis's first companions (33) he set his heart on visiting him in person. For this reason he came to Perugia, (34) where the said Brother Giles dwelt at that time, and, coming to the door of the house of the brothers like a poor unknown pilgrim with few companions, he asked with great insistency for Brother Giles, saying nothing to the porter as to who it was who was asking for him.

So the porter went to Brother Giles and told him that there was a pilgrim at the door, asking for him; God revealed to Brother Giles in his spirit that this was the King of France, therefore with great fervour he came out of his cell and ran to the door. And without any questioning, although they had never seen each other before, they both knelt down with great devotion and embraced and kissed each other with such affection as though they had been close friends for a long time. But during all this time neither said a word to the other, but continued to hold each other in their arms with signs of loving charity in silence. And after they had remained in the said manner for a long while without saying a word, they parted from each other, and St. Louis continued on his journey and Brother Giles returned to his cell.



When the king left, a friar asked one of his companions who it was who had stayed so long with his arms round Brother Giles, and he answered that he was Louis, King of France, who had come to see Brother Giles. When he told this to the other friars, they were exceedingly distressed that Brother Giles had not uttered a word, and complaining, they said to him: "Brother Giles, why were you so boorish and did not speak to such a king, who has come all the way from France to see you and to receive a good word from you?"

Brother Giles answered: "My dearest brothers, do not be surprised at this, for I could not say a word to him nor he to me because, as soon as we embraced each other, the light of divine wisdom revealed his heart to me and mine to him. And so, by a divine operation looking into each other's hearts, we understood far better what we wanted to say to each other than if we had spoken with our lips, and we received greater consolation. And if we had wanted to explain in words what we felt in our hearts, by the defects of the human language, which cannot give clear expression to the secret mysteries of God, we would have been disappointed rather than consoled, and yet you know that the king departed marvellously comforted." Praise be to Christ, Amen.

#### XXXVII

*How a rich and courteous gentleman was converted by St. Francis.*

One evening late, St. Francis, the servant of Christ, arrived at the house of a great and powerful gentleman to lodge there, and he and his companion were received like angels from paradise, with the greatest courtesy and devotion. This awakened great love for this gentleman in St. Francis, considering how, when he entered into his house, he had embraced and kissed them affectionately, then had washed their feet and lit a great fire and prepared the table with much good food. And while they were eating, the gentleman served them continually with a happy mien.

When St. Francis and his companion had eaten, that gentleman said: "Look, father, I offer myself and all my property to you; whenever you need a tunic or a cloak or anything whatever, buy them and I will pay; and understand that I am prepared to provide for all your needs, as by the grace of God I can, seeing that

I have an abundance of earthly goods, and for the love of Him who has bestowed them on me I will gladly do good to His poor."

St. Francis, seeing in him so much courtesy and loving kindness, and hearing his generous offer, conceived so great an affection for him that, when he had taken his leave, he said to his companion as they walked: "Truly, that gentleman would be an advantage to our community, for he is so grateful to God and so kindly and courteous towards his neighbour and the poor. Know, my dearest brother, that courtesy is one of the attributes of God, who bestows His sun and His rain on just and unjust alike, out of courtesy. And courtesy is the sister of charity, who extinguishes hatred and preserves love. And because I have seen in this good man such divine virtue, I would gladly have him for my companion. Therefore I would like us to return to him one day, in case God should have touched his heart so that he might desire to follow us into the service of God. In the meanwhile we will pray God to give him the grace to put this into effect." Marvellous to relate, a few days later, just as St. Francis had been at prayer, God put that desire into the heart of that gentleman. . . . And he saw St. Francis standing in prayer devoutly . . . and uplifted bodily from the earth for a considerable time. By this he was so touched by God and inspired to leave the world that he instantly went out of his palace, and in fervour of spirit ran towards St. Francis, and, coming to him as he was in prayer, he knelt down at his feet and with great insistence and devotion he entreated him to be pleased to receive him that he might do penance together with him.

Then St. Francis, seeing that God had granted his prayer, and that that gentleman was asking with great insistence for what he himself wished, arose in fervour and gladness of spirit, and embraced and kissed him, devoutly giving thanks to God, who had increased his company by so perfect a knight. And that gentleman said to St. Francis: "What do you command that I should do, my father? Look, I am prepared to give all I possess to the poor and to follow Christ with you, relieved of all temporal things."

And so he did, and according to the bidding of St. Francis he distributed his property among the poor and entered the Order, where he led a life of great penitence and saintliness and goodly conversation. Praise be to Christ.

## XXXIX, XL

*How St. Anthony preached to the fishes of the sea.*

The marvellous vessel of the Holy Ghost, St. Anthony of Padua, (35) one of the elect disciples and companions of St. Francis, whom he used to call his Bishop, once preached in the consistory before the Pope and the Cardinals . . . and he set forth so clearly and so learnedly the word of God that all who were in the consistory, although they were of diverse languages, understood his words clearly and distinctly as though he had spoken in the native tongue of each one of them, and they were all amazed. . . . The Pope likewise, considering the profundity of his words and marvelling at it, said: "Truly, this man is the ark of the Testament and the armoury of Holy Writ. . . ."

Christ, the Blessed One, desiring to demonstrate the great sanctity of His most faithful servant, St. Anthony, and how devoutly his preaching and his holy doctrine should be listened to, at one time, by unreasonable animals, namely fishes, reproved the foolishness of infidel heretics, in the same manner as of yore in the Old Testament, He had reproved the ignorance of Balaam through the mouth of the ass. Thus, St. Anthony was at Rimini where there were great numbers of heretics, and desiring to bring them back to the light of the true faith and on to the path of truth, he preached to them for many days, and held disputations on the faith of Christ and Holy Writ. But they resisted his holy words and in their hardness and obstinacy refused to listen to St. Anthony. One day, by divine inspiration, he went to the river bank near the sea, and standing there on the bank between the river and the sea, he began to speak to the fishes in the name of God, preaching to them: "Listen to the word of God, you fishes of the sea and of the river, as the infidel heretics scorn to hear it!"

And as soon as he had said these words, there came to the bank where he stood a multitude of fishes, great, small and middling, more than had ever been seen on that coast or in that river. And they all stretched their heads out of the water and turned attentively towards the face of St. Anthony, all in great peace, gentleness and orderliness. For the smallest fishes were in front, by the bank, and

behind them the middling ones, and at the back, where the water was deeper, the biggest fishes. When the fishes were thus placed in order and array, St. Anthony began to preach solemnly and said:

“O Fishes, my Brothers, you are bound, according to your means, to render great thanks to our Creator, who has given you so noble an element for your habitation, so that, as it pleases you, you have sweet and salt waters, and there are given you many hiding-places where you can escape the storms; and a clear and transparent element has been given you, and food by which you can live. God, your courteous and benign creator, gave you the command, when He created you, to grow and multiply, and He gave you His blessing. Then, when the deluge came, all the other animals died, but God kept you alone safe from harm. And He has given you fins so that you can roam wherever you please. You received the privilege, by the commandment of God, to give refuge to the Prophet Jonah and on the third day to throw him safe and whole on to the land. You offered the tribute-money to our Lord Jesus Christ when He, being so poor, had not the wherewithal to pay it. Then you served as food to the eternal king Jesus Christ, both before His resurrection and afterwards, by a singular mystery. For all these things you are bound greatly to praise and bless the Lord God, for He has given you more blessings than to the other creatures.”

At these and similar words of St. Anthony the fishes began to open their mouths and bend their heads, and with these and other signs of reverence, according to their means, they praised the Lord God. Then St. Anthony, seeing so great a reverence shown by the fish to God their Creator, rejoiced in spirit and said in a loud voice: “Blessed be the everlasting God, for the fish of the water honour Him more than heretical men, and unreasonable beasts listen to His word better than the infidels!”

And the longer St. Anthony preached, the greater became the numbers of the fish, and not one left the place it had taken. At the news of this miracle the people of the city hastened to the spot, sweeping the above-mentioned heretics along with them. And these, seeing this marvellous and manifest miracle, were touched to the heart with contrition and they all threw themselves at St. Anthony's feet to hear his sermon.

Then St. Anthony began to preach on the Catholic faith, and he

preached so nobly that the heretics were all converted and returned to the true faith of Christ; and all the faithful remained in great joy, comforted and strengthened in their faith. . . . Then St. Anthony remained in Rimini and preached there for many days, reaping a great spiritual harvest of souls. (36) Praise be to Christ, Amen.

## XLI

*Of the great saintliness of Brother Simon of Assisi.*

During the beginnings of the Order, in the life-time of St. Francis, there came to the Order a youth from Assisi who was called Brother Simon, (37) whom God adorned with so much grace and such depth of contemplation and elevation of mind that his whole life was a mirror of sanctity, according to those who were with him a long time. He was seen but rarely outside his cell, and whenever he was with the brothers he always spoke of God. He had never studied grammar, but nevertheless he could speak of God and of the love of Christ with such profundity and elevation that his words seemed more than the words of man.

One evening, while he was in the wood with Brother Jacopo of Massa in order to talk about God, and speaking most suavely about divine love, they remained the whole night long holding this converse, and in the morning they thought they had only been there quite a short time, so the said Brother Jacopo told me. . . .

One time he was rapt in God and insensible to the world, consumed inwardly by the divine love of God and feeling nothing outside with his corporal senses, and a brother, desiring to test this state and find out if it really was as it appeared, took a glowing coal out of the fire and laid it on Brother Simon's bare foot. And Brother Simon felt nothing, and it made no mark on his foot, although it stayed there for a considerable time, so long that it no longer glowed, having spent itself. . . .

Through his godly conversation he once converted a young man of San Severino, who in the world was a very vain and worldly youth, of noble descent and very delicately reared. When Brother Simon received the said youth into the order, he kept his secular raiment in his own keeping, and the young man stayed with Brother Simon

so that he should instruct him on the observance of the Rule. Thereupon the demon, who tries to thwart all good, incited him with so ardent a temptation of the flesh that the young man could no longer resist, and went to Brother Simon and said to him: "Give me back my clothes which I brought from the world, for I can no longer sustain the carnal temptation!" And Brother Simon, moved by compassion towards him, said to him: "Sit down here with me a little, my son," and he began to speak to him of God, and every temptation vanished. . . . This he did several times, but one night the said temptation assailed the youth mightily, more than ever before. . . . Then Brother Simon, according to his usage, made him sit down beside him and spoke to him of God; and the youth laid his head on Brother Simon's knees, filled with melancholy and sadness. Then Brother Simon in his great compassion lifted his eyes to Heaven and as he prayed most devoutly to the Lord God for him, he was rapt in ecstasy and his prayer was granted. When Brother Simon returned to himself the youth felt himself wholly liberated of that temptation, as though he had never felt it.

Now, as the ardour of the temptation had been transformed into the ardour of the Holy Spirit because he had approached the glowing coal, that is Brother Simon, he became wholly inflamed with the love of God and of his neighbour, so much so that once, when a malefactor had been captured who was to have both his eyes put out, the young friar in his compassion went boldly to the Governor and the Council. With many tears and entreaties he asked that they should put out one of his eyes and one of the malefactor's, so that the latter should not remain entirely deprived of sight. But the Governor and the Council, seeing the great fervour and charity of this friar, pardoned them both.

One day when Brother Simon was praying in the wood and feeling great consolation in his soul, a flock of crows began to annoy him with their crowing. Therefore he commanded them in the name of Jesus to fly away and not to return. And the said birds flew away and were never again seen there or anywhere in the neighbourhood, and this miracle was manifest to all the custody of Fermo, wherein the said house was situated. To the praise of Christ.

## PART II

## THE HOLY FRIARS IN THE MARCH OF ANCONA

The author of this section, Ugolino the Younger, opens with the praises of the excellent virtues of the men he is about to describe, just as the author of the first part began with the praises of St. Francis. His style is softer, vibrating with emotion, for now he is speaking of the saints whom he knew personally, and they suffered, as he himself suffered, for their faith in the ideal of the Little Poor Man. The events he describes, blending actuality with myth, take place in the province of the Order that is limited by the March of Ancona. The time is the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth century, (38) when a gentle hermit became Pope Celestinus V, only to abdicate after a short time in favour of the autocratic and energetic Pope Boniface VIII.

The characters described in these legends were among the finest men of the "Spiritual" movement. They opposed the other tendency in the Order, that of the "Conventuals" by insisting on carrying on the true spirit of the Poor Man of Assisi, convinced that they were bound to do so by their vows and filled with love and charity. As the greatness and fame of St. Francis consisted in the imitation of Christ, so they believed that they were following Christ by imitating the Founder of the Order. As we have said before, they were ascetics, vowed to absolute poverty. The Order as a whole, encouraged by the Papal "privileges" and competing with the scientific celebrity of the Dominicans in Bologna, Oxford, and Paris, had relinquished its pristine ideals of meditation and popular preaching. In its great Houses of Study, churches and monasteries it "had gone very far away from the outward forms of the original foundation, and up to a point from its spiritual ideals" (Ehrle).<sup>1</sup> All the greater was the zeal with which these "holy survivors" served the early ideals, and we must honour their faithful adherence to the traditions of the first Franciscans.

A "left wing" in the movement allowed itself to be carried away by the mystical and fantastic ideas of the adherents of Brother Jacomo and entered into a passionate controversy to save what they considered "the pure Church of the Spirit". They were banned by the Council of Vienne in 1312. There were those among the

<sup>1</sup> *Archive III*, p. 597.

Spirituals who considered that the "Gospel of Jesus" demanded absolute destitution and were inclined to pillory the kind of Christianity we might define to-day as "bourgeois"—but not all of them, by a long way, suffered from this complex. On the whole those men whose memory has been preserved for posterity by the *Fioretti* believed and tried to follow the simple and humble teaching of St. Francis.

Admittedly nothing ever repeats itself in an absolutely identical manner, and we must consider the changed circumstances of the times when this "second springtime" of the Franciscan spirit appeared. Through the persecutions they had to suffer from Pope Boniface and the Conventuals these disciples of the Little Poor Man were forced to flee into the forests. As true sons of their founder they loved solitude, but the spiritual sufferings they had undergone had left their mark on them and their devotion took on an ecstatic and visionary character. True, the early brothers also had ecstasies and visions, but now they seemed inclined to measure the degree of a man's saintliness by his supernatural experiences. These friars read the Bible, the Rule, the Testament of St. Francis, the reminiscences of Brother Leo, which had come to them out of their hiding-place in the convent of the Poor Clares; as students they had become familiar with the mystic writings of St. Bonaventure, and it is obvious that the old legends of the Desert Fathers and St. Bernard's exegesis of the Song of Songs were not unknown to them. This is proved by the tone of several chapters in this section, and even by a formal quotation (in chapter xlix).

When these friars meditate, their spirit is in the Third Heaven, and their body is levitated several feet above the ground. An extraordinarily great importance is attached to visionary experiences; one friar relates them to another, and what has been noted down by the chronicler contains, next to elements of pure and childlike beauty, many spiritually worthless, harmless little tales belonging to that borderland of mysticism where the mystery threatens to degenerate into a trifling of the dreaming heart. We feel that it is impossible to include all such chapters here, a few examples must suffice:

In chapter xliii a friar sees the torments one of his brothers must endure in Purgatory for the misdemeanours he committed as a boy; a number of newly-released souls appear to another during the Mass for the souls in Purgatory (chapter l); a third sees the soul of his own brother fly up to heaven immediately after his death (chapter



xlvi). A young friar receives a promise from his spiritual father that he will appear to him after death, and when this happens, the familiar theme of the Infant Jesus appearing in the Eucharist recurs (chapter li) to be repeated later in greater detail (chapter liii). The Blessed Virgin, with a very great company, appears to a brother who is sick and "with a spoon from a box" gives him so much electuary that he "cannot endure such sweetness" (chapter xlvii).

While leaving out these chapters, I am perfectly aware that the people, especially in Italy, were and are still very much inclined to enjoy such tales. But they would be out of place in this edition. We may even be tempted to smile at one or the other of these stories (and it would not be exactly a sacrilege if we did!), but perhaps the best thing is to say as St. Paul did to the Athenians: "I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious" (Acts xvii. 22).

I must add one more criticism, although it goes against the *Fioretti* and also against Sabatier, but "truth must prevail". It refers to the long description, in chapter xlviii, of Brother Jacomo of Massa's vision of the great tree whose branches were the provinces of the Order, and whose fruits were the Brothers Minor. On the highest point he sees Brother John of Parma—the predecessor of St. Bonaventure, who resigned in the latter's favour in 1257 and was greatly revered by the Spirituals. He then sees Christ on a throne, giving a chalice "filled with the spirit of life" to St. Francis, who in his turn gives it to the brothers to drink. John of Parma empties it and becomes shining like the sun, the others drink more or less of it, most of them only a little. Then, because of an approaching tempest, Brother John comes down from the top of the tree, and Bonaventure comes up and takes his place (the Italian translator does not mention his name, only saying "one of the brothers"—which is not surprising in view of the following). He has only drunk part of the chalice, and spilt part. Then follows a horrible description of how Bonaventure, the great Saint, suddenly grows nails of iron, sharp as razors, and "with rage and fury" hurls himself at Brother John. The latter commends himself to Christ, who then sends St. Francis to "cut off the nails of that brother" with a sharp flint-stone. Then a storm of wind arises, shaking the tree so violently that the brothers fall to the ground, first of all they who had spilt the contents of the chalice of life (the doctrine of the Spirituals). They are dragged away by devils, but the good brothers are borne by angels into the light eternal; the tree falls, but out of its root another tree springs up, all of gold and bearing leaves and fruit and flowers of gold.

Sabatier is enthusiastic about this story (39) and says that although not every text contained in the *Fioretti* is first-class, "in the forty-eighth chapter we see Brother Ugolino (author of the *Floretum*) scaling once more the highest pinnacle of art out of love and admiration for John of Parma. The oftener we read this chapter, the more clearly emerges one of the loftiest sentiments that can move the human heart, the despair and indescribable sadness of a man who must witness the shipwreck of the ideals that had been his very life."

To my mind, on the contrary, this chapter appears to be quite inconsistent with the rest of the *Fioretti*. The allegory in itself is certainly not artless, but in the very worst of taste and full of malice towards all those who opposed the Spirituals, and especially towards the person of Bonaventure. (40)

It is only fair towards Brother Ugolino, the author of this section of the *Fioretti*, to point out that this legend is not his work. Sabatier himself admits (41) that he could not find this forty-eighth chapter in the Latin original, only in the Italian version and in the *Speculum vitae* (not to be confused with the *Speculum perfectionis*) which appeared at least a century later. I cannot understand how, under these circumstances, Sabatier could still praise Ugolino for this chapter. Its real author is none other than Angelo Clareno, in whose writings this story appears as a vision of Brother Jacopo of Massa. In the *Fioretti* this chapter is a foreign body, but it is absolutely consistent with the passionate polemic of Angelo Clareno. From there it was smuggled into the collection of the *Little Flowers* at a much later date.

The chief personage we meet in these pages of the *Fioretti* is Conrad of Offida, and it would seem opportune to state here what we know of him from other sources. His rôle among the Spirituals of the end of the thirteenth century is approximately that of Brother Bernard of Assisi among the companions of St. Francis. He was born in 1241 in Offida, joined the Order in 1256 and died in 1306. He was a friend of Ubertino da Casale and it was through him that the latter became familiar with the papers of Brother Leo, to which he refers in his book *Arbor Vitae*.

Angelo Clareno, in his *Story of the Seven Tribulations* says of Brother Conrad:

"When Peter of Morone was elected Pope [as Celestinus V, 5 July 1294] the Minister General [Raymond Gaufredi] and all the Ministers, filled as we believe by Christ and the Holy Spirit, namely

the Brothers Conrad of Offida, Pietro of Monticello, Jacopone da Todi [the mystical poet], Thomas of Tiedi, Conrad of Spoleto and others who had the pure observance of the Rule at heart, decided to send Peter of Macerata and his companion [i.e. Angelo Clareno himself] to the Pope in order to crave his permission, for themselves and the other friars, to fulfil their vows in holy obedience [towards the authority of the Church] without let or hindrance." [He goes on to say that the Pope received them kindly, but that men hired by the opposing party had attacked them, whereupon Pope Celestinus abdicated and the Spirituals had to flee to the hermitages.] "Brother Conrad had to bear the brunt of the persecution in Italy. He was a man anointed by the Holy Spirit, who devoted his whole life to Christ and His faith. With all his heart he followed the footsteps of St. Francis, attempting to imitate him in everything, so that all Franciscans who saw him confessed that they felt him to be another Francis. When John of Murro became Minister General [1296] a number of grave charges were laid against Brother Conrad." [The Minister General, so the text continues, was indignant at first, but later recognized the truth by the words of Brother Conrad.] "From then on he cherished Brother Conrad with increasing reverence, and until his death he often sent for him and was always happy to see him and hear his words."

As John of Murro was strongly opposed to the Spirituals, Brother Conrad must have behaved in a manner that allayed his suspicions. It appears improbable that he should have been the author of the *Liber de Flore*. Tradition, however, has preserved some of his prophetic utterances which show him as a true son of his times, which were saturated with mysticism. The Church confirmed his cult with the title "Venerable" in 1817.

## XLII

*Of many holy Brothers, and of many miracles they worked.*

The province of the March of Ancona, like the sky with stars, was once adorned with holy and exemplary friars, who, like the luminaries in the sky, illuminated and adorned the Order of St. Francis and the world with their example and their doctrine.

Among the others the foremost was Brother Lucido the Elder, (42) who was truly lucent with holiness and ardent with divine

charity, and his glorious tongue, informed by the Holy Spirit, brought forth marvellous fruit in preaching. Another was Brother Bentivoglio da San Severino, who was seen once by Brother Masseo, (43) who was also a native of San Severino, levitated in the air for a long while as he was at prayer in the wood; it was because of this miracle that Brother Masseo, who was at that time a parish priest, left his parish and became a Brother Minor; and he was of such sanctity that he wrought many miracles in his lifetime and after his death.

The above-mentioned Brother Bentivoglio was staying alone one time at Trave Bonanti to watch and serve a leper, when his Superior bade him depart and go to another place about fifteen miles distant. As he did not want to forsake the leper, he took him with great fervour of charity and laid him on his shoulder, and carried him from dawn to sunrise all that way of fifteen miles to the said place where he had been sent, which was called Monte San Vicino. Even if he had been an eagle, he could not have laid back that distance in so short a time, and carrying such a load, and there was great amazement and admiration at this divine miracle in all that countryside. (44)

Another was Brother Peter of Monticello, who was seen by Brother Servodio of Urbino, at the time guardian of the old House at Urbino, uplifted bodily to a distance of five or six cubits from the ground to the foot of the Crucifix in the church, before which he was praying. . . .

At the time of this holy Brother Peter, there lived a Brother Conrad of Offida, and while they were together in the House of Forano in the Custody of Ancona, the said Brother Conrad went out one day into the wood to meditate on God, and Brother Peter followed him secretly so as to see what happened to him. And Brother Conrad began to pray, devoutly beseeching the Virgin Mary with much weeping to obtain from her blessed Son the grace that he might experience a little of that sweet consolation which St. Simeon felt on the day of the Purification, when he carried Jesus, our blessed Saviour, in his arms.

And when he had prayed thus, the merciful Virgin Mary granted his prayer and, lo, there appeared the Queen of Heaven with her blessed Son in her arms in a blaze of light, and coming near Brother

Conrad, she laid the Divine Child into his arms. Most devoutly he took the Child, embraced and kissed it and pressed it against his bosom, and he was entirely dissolved into divine love and ineffable consolation. And Brother Peter likewise, who was watching all this from his hiding-place, felt a great sweetness and consolation in his soul; and when the Virgin Mary had departed from Brother Conrad, Brother Peter returned in haste to the House so as not to be seen by him, but later, when Brother Conrad returned full of joy and gladness, he said to him: "O you heavenly one, what a great consolation has been given you to-day!" Brother Conrad said: "What is that you are saying, Brother Peter? what do you know that I have had to-day?" "I know well, very well," said Brother Peter, "how the Virgin Mary and her blessed Son have visited you." Then Brother Conrad, who in his great humility desired to keep the graces God granted him secret, begged him not to speak of it to anyone. And from then on there was so great a love between them that they seemed to have but one heart and one soul in all things.

Once the said Brother Conrad, at the hermitage of Sirolo, set free by his prayers a woman who was possessed by the devil, after praying for her all through the night, and actually appearing to the woman's mother; in the morning he fled, so as not to be found and honoured by the people. To the praise of Christ, Amen.

#### XLIV

#### *How the Mother of Christ, St. John the Evangelist and St. Francis appeared to Brother Peter.*

At the time when Brother Conrad dwelt in the Custody of Ancona, at the hermitage of Forano, together with the above-mentioned Brother Peter, both of them being shining stars in the province of the March, and truly a pair of celestial men . . . it happened one day, while Brother Peter was at prayer and meditating devoutly on the Passion of Christ and how the blessed Mother of Christ, and St. John, the beloved disciple, and St. Francis were depicted at the foot of the Cross, crucified with Christ by their mental agony, he felt the desire to know which of the three had

suffered most through the Passion of Christ. Was it the Mother who had borne Him, or the disciple who had lain on His breast, or St. Francis, who had been crucified with Christ in his body?

And while Brother Peter was devoutly thinking on these things, there appeared to him the blessed Virgin Mary with St. John the Evangelist and with St. Francis, clad in noble raiment of blessed glory. But St. Francis appeared to be clad in more glorious raiment than St. John. Brother Peter was awe-struck at this vision, but St. John comforted him, saying: "Be not afraid, my dearest brother, for we have come to comfort you and free you from your doubts. Know therefore that the Mother of Christ and I grieve more than any other creature over the Passion of Christ, but after us St. Francis has had greater sorrow for it than any other, and that is why you see him in such glory."

And Brother Peter asked him: "Most holy Apostle of Christ, why does St. Francis's raiment seem more beautiful than yours?" St. John replied: "The reason thereof is this: because when he was in the world, he wore more wretched garments than I did." And having said these words, St. John gave Brother Peter a glorious garment which he was holding in his hands, and said to him: "Take this garment, which I have received so that I might give it to you." But as St. John was about to clothe Brother Peter in that garment, Brother Peter fell to the ground in his amazement and began to cry out aloud: "Brother Conrad, dearest Brother Conrad, hasten and come to see marvellous things!" And while he was saying these words, the vision disappeared. Then, when he saw Brother Conrad, he described to him what had happened,(45) and they thanked God. Amen.

#### XLV

*How it was revealed to Brother John of Penna that he must take a long journey.*

When Brother John of La Penna (46) was still a boy living in the world in the province of the March, one night there appeared to him a most beautiful child, who called him, saying: "O John, go to St. Stephen's, where one of the Brothers Minor is preaching; have faith in his doctrine and attend to his words, for I have sent

him to you. When you have done that, you will have to take a long journey, and then you will come to me."

Thereupon the boy immediately arose, feeling a great change in his soul. And he went to St. Stephen's, and there he found a great multitude of men and women who were standing there to hear the sermon, and he who was to preach was called Brother Philip, who was one of the first of the brethren to come to the March of Ancona; as yet they had but few houses in the March. Then Brother Philip arose to preach, and he preached most devoutly, not with words of human wisdom, but in virtue of the spirit of Christ, announcing the kingdom of eternal life. When the sermon was over, the said boy went to Brother Philip and said to him: "Father, if you would please to receive me in the Order, I would gladly do penance and serve our Lord Jesus Christ." Brother Philip, seeing and recognizing in the boy a marvellous innocence and ready will to serve God, said to him: "Come to me at Recanati on such and such a day, and I will have you received."

At that place the provincial Chapter was to be held. Thereupon the boy, who was exceedingly pure and simple, imagined that this was the long journey he must take, according to the revelation he had had, and that then he would go to heaven. This he thought would happen immediately after he had been received into the Order. So he was received, but seeing that his expectation was not realized and hearing the Minister say in Chapter that whoever wished to go to the province of Provence, would willingly be given licence by the merits of holy obedience, he felt a great desire to go there, thinking in his heart that this might be the long journey he must take before going to heaven. But he felt ashamed to say so. But at last he confided in the aforesaid Brother Philip, who had had him received into the Order, and entreated him tenderly to obtain the grace for him that he might go to the province of Provence.

Then Brother Philip, seeing his simple purity and his godly intentions, obtained the permission for him, and Brother John prepared to go with great joy, being convinced that when he had completed this journey he would go to heaven. But as it pleased God, he remained in that province thirty-five years with that expectation and desire, living in an exemplary manner with greatest honesty and saintliness, growing continually in virtue and in the

grace of God and of the people, and he was greatly beloved by the brethren and the students.

One day, when Brother John was praying devoutly, weeping and lamenting, because his longing was not fulfilled, and the pilgrimage of this life was drawn out so long, Christ the Blessed One appeared to him, and his soul melted away. And Christ said to him: "My son, Brother John, ask me whatever you like!" And he replied: "My Lord, I know not what to ask except Thyself, because I desire nothing else. But this alone will I ask Thee, that Thou shouldst forgive me all my sins and give me the grace to see Thee another time, when I will have most need of it." Christ said: "Your prayer is granted." And having said this, He departed, and Brother John remained wholly comforted.

In the end, when the brethren in the March heard such great things of his saintliness, they prevailed with the General of the Order that he should command him by holy obedience to return to the March. He received this command with a glad heart and set out on his way, thinking that when he had completed this journey he would go to heaven, according to the promise of Christ. But when he had returned to the province of the March, he lived there for thirty years, and he was no longer recognized by any of his kinsmen, and every day he hoped that God in His mercy would fulfil His promise. During that time he often filled the office of guardian with great discretion, and God wrought many miracles through him. And among the other gifts he received from God was also the spirit of prophecy. . . . And all these things were related to me, Brother Ugolino, by the said Brother John himself, a cheerful and serene man who spoke but rarely; he was a man of prayer and devotion, and especially after Matins he never returned to his cell, but remained at prayer in church until daybreak. While he was at prayer after matins one night, the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said: "Brother John, now you have come to the term of your life, which you have desired so long, and so I come to tell you from God that you may ask whichever grace you desire, either one day in Purgatory or seven days of suffering in this world."

And when Brother John chose rather seven days of suffering in this world, he suddenly fell ill with diverse infirmities. He was stricken by a great fever, and by gout in his hands and in his feet, by



a pain in his side and other pains. But the worst that happened to him was that a demon stood in front of him, holding in his hand a great scroll, on which were inscribed all the sins that he had ever committed or thought of, saying to him: "For these sins that you have committed, either in thought or by your tongue or by your works, you are damned to the nethermost hell." And he could not remember any good deed that he had ever done, neither that he was in the Order, nor that he had ever been in it, but he believed that he would be damned as the demon said. Therefore, when he was asked how he was, he would say: "I am in a bad way, for I am damned!" When the brethren saw this, they sent for an aged friar called Brother Matthew (47) of Monte Rubbiano, who was a holy man and a great friend of Brother John's. And Brother Matthew came to him on the seventh day of his tribulation, saluted him and asked him how he was. He answered that he was in a bad way, for he was damned. Then Brother Matthew said: "Now do you not remember that you have confessed to me many times and that I absolved you completely from all your sins? Do you not remember either that you have served God in this holy Order for many years? And what is more: do you not remember that God's mercy is greater than all the sins in the world, and that Christ the Blessed One, our Saviour, paid an infinite price to redeem us? Therefore have good hope, for most certainly you are saved."

And while he was speaking, the term of Brother John's purgation had come, the temptation departed and the consolation came. And with great joyousness Brother John said to Brother Matthew: "As you are tired and the hour is late, I beg you to go and rest." And Brother Matthew did not want to leave him, but in the end he gave way to his urging and left him to go and lie down. Brother John remained alone with the friar who served him. And lo! Christ the Blessed One came with great splendour and excessive sweet fragrance, according to His promise to appear to him another time, when he would have the greatest need, and He healed him completely from all his infirmities. Then Brother John rendered thanks with folded hands that he had made so good an end to the journey through the present miserable life, and into the hands of Christ he recommended and laid his eternal soul, passing from mortal

life to the life eternal with Christ the Blessed One, whom he had so long awaited and desired. . . .

## XLIX.

*How Brother John of Alverna was converted and how Christ  
visited him familiarly and lovingly.*

Among the other wise and holy brothers and sons of St. Francis, who, according to the words of Solomon, are the glory of their father, there was in the said province of the March during our time the venerable and saintly Brother John of Fermo, who dwelt for a long time in the holy place near Alverna and there departed this life, wherefore he was called Brother John of Alverna. (48) He was a man of great holiness who had led an exceptional life. This brother John, when he was a boy in the world, longed with all his heart for the life of penitence, which maintains the body and the heart in purity. Therefore, when he was still quite a little boy, he began to mortify his body and practise great abstinence; especially when he stayed with the canons of San Pietro di Fermo, who lived very lavishly, he shunned all corporal delights and mortified his flesh with great severity of abstinence. But in this he had to contend with the opposition of his companions, who . . . hindered him in diverse ways. Inspired by God, he decided to leave the world and the men who loved it, and to offer the whole of himself to the arms of the Crucified, taking the habit of the crucifix of St. Francis, and this he did. Having been received into the Order while he was still so young, he was committed to the care of the master of the novices, and he became so spiritual and devout that often, when he heard the said master speaking of God, his heart would melt like wax near the fire. . . . Once his heart was kindled with the fire of divine love, and this flame lasted in him for three whole years. . . .

But, as God has so great care of His sons, giving to them at different times, now consolation, now tribulation, now prosperity, now adversity, according to what seems best to Him in order to maintain them in humility or inflame their desire for celestial things even more, it pleased divine Mercy after those three years to take from Brother John that ray and flame of divine love and to deprive

him of every spiritual consolation. Thus Brother John remained without light and without the love of God, inconsolable, afflicted and forsaken.

Therefore in his anguish he went into the wood, running hither and thither, calling back with moans and sighs and sobs the Beloved of his soul, who had concealed Himself and departed from that soul, and without whose presence the soul could find neither peace nor rest. But in no place and in no manner could he find his sweet Jesus. . . .

In the end, when it pleased God to have tried his patience sufficiently and inflamed his desire, one day when Brother John was going through the said wood thus distressed and afflicted, and for weariness sat down and leant against a beech tree, raising his tear-stained face to heaven, Jesus Christ suddenly appeared beside him on the path along which Brother John had come; but He said nothing. Seeing and recognizing perfectly that this was Christ, Brother John threw himself at His feet and with infinite tears he besought Him most humbly, saying: "Succour me, my dear Lord, for without Thee, my most gentle Saviour, I remain in darkness and tears. Without Thee, O meekest of Lambs, I remain in anguish and terror; without Thee, most high Son of God, I remain in confusion and shame; without Thee, I am despoiled of all good and blinded, for Thou art Jesus, the true light of souls; without Thee I am lost and damned, for Thou art the life of souls, and the life of lives; without Thee I am arid and barren, for Thou art the source of every gift and every grace; without Thee I am wholly disconsolate, for Thou art Jesus our redemption, love and desire, comforting bread and wine that rejoices the hearts of the angels and the hearts of all the saints. Illumine me, gracious Master and pitiful Shepherd, for I am Thy little sheep, unworthy though I may be."

But because the desire of holy men is kindled to even greater love and merit when God delays to fulfil it, Christ the Blessed One departed without granting his prayer and without speaking a word to him, and went away along the said path. Then Brother John arose and ran after Him, and threw himself once more at His feet, and holding Him back with holy importunity, he shed abundant tears of devotion and said: "O sweetest Jesus, have mercy on my tribulations. . . .!"

And as Brother John lay<sup>7</sup> thus at the feet of Jesus, his prayer was granted and he was given back the grace he had before, namely the flame of divine love. And he felt that he had been renewed and was wholly comforted. And recognizing that the gift of divine grace had descended on him again, he began to thank Christ the Blessed One and to embrace His feet most devoutly, and then, as he lifted his eyes to gaze at the Saviour's countenance, Christ condescended to give him His most holy hands to kiss . . . and he leant against Jesus' breast and embraced and kissed Him, and Christ likewise embraced and kissed Brother John. And in this embrace Brother John noticed so strong a divine fragrance that if all the spices and sweet-smelling things of the earth had been united it would have seemed a stench in comparison to that divine odour. And Brother John was wholly rapt and consoled and enlightened, and that odour remained in his soul for many months. And from then on from his lips, which had drunk from the fount of divine wisdom . . . issued marvellous and celestial words which changed the hearts of all who heard them and reaped a great harvest of souls. . . . And although he was not a lettered man through human studies, nevertheless he solved most wonderfully the subtle and lofty questions touching the Holy Trinity, and the profound mysteries of Holy Writ. And often, when he was speaking before the Pope and the Cardinals, and before kings, barons, masters and doctors, (51) he amazed them all by the lofty words and profound phrases he pronounced.

[The following passage from the Latin *Floretum* is not in the *Fioretti*]: The fact which we see from the above, namely that Brother John was first admitted to kiss the feet of Christ, then His hands and lastly in blessed rapture allowed to lean against His breast, conceals a deep mystery which cannot be explained in brief words. Those who would fathom it should read Bernard's commentaries on the Song of Songs, where he treats of these steps one by one.

## LII

*How Christ showed and gave to understand to Brother  
John the mystery of the Holy Trinity.*

Because the said Brother John of Alverna had perfectly renounced all worldly and temporal delights and consolations, and had placed all his delight and hope in God, divine mercy vouchsafed him marvellous consolations, and revelations, most especially on the high festivals of Christ. . . . And he received many and marvellous visitations and consolations from God, and several times he was rapt in ecstasy, as was seen by the brother who first wrote down these things. Once he was so uplifted and rapt in God that he saw in Him, the Creator, all created things of heaven and earth and all their perfections and grades and distinct orders; he recognized clearly how every created thing represented its Creator, and how God is above and below and within and without and beside all created things.

Then he knew God in Three Persons, and Three Persons in one God, and the infinite love which caused the Son of God to become incarnate in obedience to the Father, and lastly he recognized in that vision that there was no other way by which the soul can go to God and receive eternal life except through Jesus Christ, who is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life of the soul, Amen.

[The following paragraph is found in the Latin version only.]

Furthermore in this vision all things were shown to him which Christ fulfilled from the beginning of creation until the beginning of life eternal, how He is the "head of the body", "the firstborn of every creature" that has been from the beginning and will be unto the end, according to the promise of the holy Prophet. Praise be to our Lord Jesus Christ.

## PART III

## OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN OF ALVERNA

THIS LAST section of the *Fioretti*, consisting of three "Reflections" to which we add a text that bears on their theme, is certainly founded on the testimony of first-hand witnesses. Brother Leo is suggested

in the first instance. According to Thomas Eccleston, who wrote his *Chronicles* between 1264 and 1270, Leo had often described the stigmatization of St. Francis to the younger friars; it is certain that Brother Leo was with St. Francis on Mount Alverna, and also that he noted down, during the last years of his life, many things for posterity, in the papers he left in the care of the Poor Clares. Both these facts favour the hypothesis that the Saint's secretary is responsible for the material of these reflections, and there is an actual passage in the text which appears to confirm this theory. (52) The historical accuracy of the story is born out by a comparison with the testimonies of contemporary witnesses (53) of several of the facts described. Those that are to be found only in the *Fioretti* are founded on oral traditions handed down among the disciples of Brother Leo, and it is probable that some of them were also preserved in his notes.

## LV

*How Messer Orlando da Chiusi gave Mount Alverna to  
St. Francis.*

In this part we shall look with devout consideration at the glorious Stigmata of our blessed father, Messer St. Francis, which he received from Christ on the holy mountain of Alverna. . . . As to the first reflection, it must be known that St. Francis, being then forty-three years of age, in 1224 (54) was inspired by God to leave the valley of Spoleto and to go to Romagna with Brother Leo, his companion. On their way they passed at the foot of the castle of Montefeltro, where at that time there was a great banquet and gathering in honour of one of these Counts of Montefeltro having received the knighthood. When St. Francis heard of the solemnity which was being celebrated there, to which many gentlemen from different countries had been invited, he said to Brother Leo: "Let us go up to that feast, for with God's help we may reap a spiritual harvest there!"

Among the other gentlemen who had come to that gathering, there was also a great gentleman of Tuscany, by name Messer Orlando da Chiusi di Casentino, who because of the wonderful things he had heard about St. Francis's saintliness and miracles, had a great devotion towards him and longed to see him and to hear him preach.

St. Francis came to the castle and went in and came to the courtyard, where a multitude of gentlemen were assembled, and in great fervour of spirit he climbed on to a little wall and began to preach, taking as the text of his sermon these words in the vernacular:

"So great a good have I in sight  
That every pain becomes delight."

And on this theme, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he preached so devoutly and so profoundly, proving the truth of the saying by the diverse pains and martyrdoms of the holy apostles and the holy martyrs and the harsh penances of the holy confessors, and the many tribulations and temptations of the holy virgins and the other saints, that all the people remained with their eyes and their minds fixed on him, and they listened as though an angel of God were speaking.

Among them the said Messer Orlando, touched to the heart by God through the marvellous preaching of St. Francis, resolved to talk over and reason upon the state of his soul with him after the sermon. So when the sermon was over, he drew St. Francis apart and said to him: "Father, I would like to speak to you about the salvation of my soul." St. Francis answered: "That would give me much pleasure, but this morning you must go and honour the friends who have invited you to the feast and dine with them, and after dinner we will talk together as long as you like." So Messer Orlando went to dinner, and after dinner he returned to St. Francis and confided to him and discussed with him all the facts concerning his soul. And in the end Messer Orlando said to St. Francis: "In Tuscany I have a mountain well fitted for devotion, which is called Mount Alverna, which is very solitary and wild and is eminently suitable for whoever wishes to do penance in a place remote from mankind or for someone desiring to lead a solitary life. If it should please you, I would gladly give it to you and to your companions, for the salvation of my soul."

When St. Francis heard this generous offer of something he desired so much, he was overjoyed, and rendering praise and thanks first to God and then to Messer Orlando, he said to him: "Messere, when you have returned to your home, I will send some of my companions to you and you will show them that mountain, and if it appears to them suitable for prayer and penance, I will herewith accept your charitable offer."

And having said this, St. Francis took his leave, and when he had completed his journey he returned to St. Mary of the Angels. And likewise Messer Orlando, when the celebrations of that gathering were over, returned to his castle which is called Chiusi and lies about a mile distant from Alverna. When St. Francis had got back to St. Mary of the Angels, he sent two of his companions to the said Messer Orlando, and when they got there they were received by him with great joy and affection. And wanting to show them the mountain of Alverna, he sent fifty armed men to escort them, so that they might protect them from the wild beasts. And thus accompanied, those friars climbed on to the mountain and prospected it diligently, until at last they came to a part of the mountain which had a very devout atmosphere and seemed very suitable for contemplation, in which part there was some level ground. This spot they selected for their habitation and that of St. Francis, and with the help of the armed men who had accompanied them they erected a few cells out of the branches of trees. Thus they accepted and took possession, in the name of God, of the mountain of Alverna and the settlement of the brothers on that mountain, and departed.

And when they had come back to St. Francis, they described to him how and in what manner they had taken the place on the mountain of Alverna, most suitable for prayer and contemplation.

Then (in summer 1224) St. Francis took with him Brother Masseo da Marignano of Assisi, who was a man of great good sense and eloquence, and Brother Angelo Tancredi of Assisi, who was a great gentleman and had been a knight in the world, and Brother Leo, who was a man of great simplicity and purity, for which reason St. Francis loved him dearly and revealed all his secrets to him. With these three brothers St. Francis knelt down to pray, and when he had finished praying he recommended himself and his above-mentioned companions to the prayers of the brethren who stayed behind, and he set out with those three in the name of Christ crucified to Mount Alverna. And when they had started, St. Francis called one of the three companions, namely Brother Masseo, and said to him: "You, Brother Masseo, shall be our guardian and our superior on this journey, while we walk and stay together and follow our usage, that is to say, either we will say our office, or we will speak of God, or we will keep silent; and we will not trouble



beforehand as to what we should eat nor where we should sleep. But when it will be time to take shelter for the night, we will beg a little bread and we will stay and rest in whatever place God shall prepare for us."

Thereupon the three companions bent their heads and, making the sign of the cross, they went on. And on the first evening they arrived at a house of the brothers and lodged there, the second evening, partly because of the bad weather and because they were weary, they could not reach any house of the brothers, nor any castle or village, and as night fell and it rained, they took shelter in an abandoned and forsaken church, and there they laid down to rest.

And when the companions were asleep, St. Francis entered into prayer, and, as he continued to pray, there appeared in the first watch of the night a great multitude of ferocious demons with great noise and tumult, and they began to vex and trouble him exceedingly. One snatched at him here, the other there, one dragged him up, the other down; one threatened him with this, the other accused him of that, and so in diverse ways they attempted to disturb him in his orisons, but they did not succeed, because God was with him. So, when St. Francis had sustained this struggle with the demons for a long time, he began to call out in a loud voice:

"O you damned spirits, you can do nothing unless the hand of God permits it. Therefore, I tell you, in the name of almighty God, do to my body what is permitted by God, for that is a thing I will willingly endure, seeing that I have no worse enemy than my body. Therefore, if you take revenge for me on my body, you will be doing me a very great service." Then the demons, with tremendous impetus and fury, took him and began to drag him around in the church, and to molest and annoy him even more than before. And St. Francis began to call out and to say:

"My Lord, I thank Thee for all the love and charity that Thou dost show me, for it is a sign of great love when the Lord punishes all our transgressions in this world, so that we shall not be punished in the next world. And I am ready to endure every pain and every adversity which Thou, O God, wilt send me for my sins."

Thereupon the demons, confused and routed by his constancy and patience, departed and St. Francis in great fervour of spirit went out of the church and entered a wood which was nearby. And there he

entered into prayer, and with prayers and tears, and beating on his breast, he sought to find Jesus, the Spouse and Beloved of his soul. And at last finding Him in the hidden depths of his own soul, he began speaking with Him now reverently as with his Lord, now praying to Him as to a father, now reasoning with Him as with a friend.

That night, in that wood, his companions, after they had awakened and had come out to listen and to watch what he was doing, saw him thus and heard him praying devoutly with weeping and sobbing, for divine mercy on all sinners. He was also seen and heard by them lamenting in a loud voice over the Passion of Christ as though he were watching it with his bodily eyes. During that same night they saw him praying, his arms outstretched in the form of a cross, suspended and raised up from the ground for a long while and surrounded by a resplendent cloud of light. And thus, in such holy exercises, he spent the entire night without sleeping. In the morning, as the companions knew that Saint Francis through the exertions of that night and the lack of sleep, was weak and exhausted and would hardly be able to put the way behind him on foot, they went to a poor peasant in the countryside and begged him for the love of God to lend them his little donkey for Brother Francis their father, who was unable to walk. When that man heard them mention Brother Francis, he asked them: "Are you of the brothers of that Brother Francis of Assisi, of whom so much good is spoken?" The friars replied that it was so, and that it was for him they were asking the loan of a mount. Then that good man with great devotion and solicitude prepared the donkey and led him to St. Francis, and with great reverence helped him to mount it. And as they went on, the peasant accompanied them, walking behind his donkey.

And after they had walked on for a while, the peasant said to St. Francis: "Tell me whether you are Brother Francis of Assisi?" St. Francis answered "Yes". "Then you must take great pains," said the peasant, "to be as good as all the people think you are, for many have great faith in you. But I warn you, do not be different from what the people hope you are."

When St. Francis heard these words, he was not offended at being thus admonished by a peasant and did not say to himself: "What sort of a brute is this who admonishes me?" as many proud

men who wear the cowl might say to-day. But instantly he threw himself down from his donkey on to the ground and, kneeling down before the peasant, he kissed his feet and thanked him humbly for having deigned to admonish him so charitably. Thereupon the peasant, together with the companions of St. Francis, lifted him up with great devotion and put him onto the donkey again, and they went on. When they had got about half-way up the mountain, as the heat was fierce and the way very steep and wearying, the said peasant was sorely tried by great thirst as well as by the heat, and he began to call out to St. Francis: "Woe is me, I am dying of thirst, and if I do not have something to drink, that will be the end of me!"

Therefore St. Francis got down from his donkey and entered into prayer, and he remained kneeling with his hands uplifted to heaven until he knew by revelation that God had granted his prayer, and he said to the peasant: "Run, go straight to that rock, and there you will find the living water which Christ in His mercy has brought forth from the rock in this very hour." The peasant ran to the place St. Francis had shown him, and there he found a beautiful spring, produced by the virtue of St. Francis's prayers out of the hard rock; and he drank copiously and was comforted. . . . After this St. Francis, together with his companions and the peasant, thanked God for the miracle He had shown forth, and then they went on.

And when they came near the actual rocks of Alverna, St. Francis wished to rest a little under an oak tree which stood beside the way. . . . And sitting under it, St. Francis began to consider the disposition of the place and the countryside. And while he was sitting thus, there came a great multitude of different birds, and all of them, with singing and beating of their wings, showed great joy and delight and surrounded St. Francis in such a manner that some alighted on his head, some on his shoulders, some on his arms, some on his knees and some around his feet. When his companions and the peasant saw this and were amazed, St. Francis said to them very joyfully: "I believe, my dearest brothers, that our Lord Jesus Christ is pleased that we should dwell on this solitary mountain, because our brothers and sisters the birds show so much pleasure at our coming." And when he said these words, he arose and they went on, and in the end they arrived at the place that his companions had first chosen. Praised be God and glory to His most holy Name, Amen.

## LVI

*Of St. Francis's conversation with his companions, and how he was visited by the Lord.*

When Messer Orlando heard that St. Francis had gone up with three companions to dwell on the mountain of Alverna, he rejoiced, and on the following day he left his castle with many followers and went to visit him, bringing with him bread and other victuals for the Saint and his companions. And when he arrived at the top, he found them at prayer, and approaching them, he saluted them. Then St. Francis arose and with the greatest charity and pleasure he received Messer Orlando and his company, and then they sat down and began to converse together. And when they had talked and St. Francis had thanked him for the holy mountain he had given him and for his visit, he begged him to have a poor cell made for him at the foot of a magnificent beech tree which stood about a stone's throw away from the cells of the brethren, for this seemed to him a very holy spot, well suited for prayer. And Messer Orlando immediately had it done. And when this had been done, and as evening was approaching and it was time for them to leave, St. Francis preached to them a little before they departed. Then, after he had preached and given them his blessing, Messer Orlando before leaving drew aside St. Francis as well as his companions, and said to them: "My dearest brothers, it is not my intention that you should endure any bodily deprivation in this wild mountain, by which you might be less able to attend to spiritual matters. Therefore I wish, and this I tell you once for all, that you should confidently send to my house for anything you may need, and if you were to do the contrary I would take it in very bad part." And having said this, he departed with his company and returned to his castle at Chiusi.

Thereupon St. Francis made his companions sit down and instructed them on the manner of life they and whoever wished to live religiously in hermitages should lead. Among other things he bade them most especially to keep the observance of holy poverty, saying: "Do not heed the charitable offer of Messer Orlando too much, so that you should not in any way offend your mistress, our Lady Poverty. You may be sure that the more we scorn poverty

the more the world will scorn us and the more we will suffer want. But if we embrace holy poverty as closely as we can, the world will follow us and nourish us abundantly. . . . And since I see that I am approaching death, I intend to remain in solitude and recollect myself in God and weep over my sins before Him; and Brother Leo, when he sees fit, shall bring me a little bread and a little water. And on no account let any secular person come to me, but you answer them in my stead."

And having said these words, he gave them his blessing and went to the cell under the beech-tree, and the companions remained in the settlement with the firm resolve of observing St. Francis's holy commandments. A few days later St. Francis was standing beside his cell, considering the shape of the mountain and marvelling at the great clefts and fissures in the mighty rocks; and then it was revealed to him that these amazing fissures had been miraculously rent in the rock in the hour of Christ's Passion, when, as the Gospel says, the rocks were rent asunder. . . . And he recollected himself entirely and disposed himself to apprehend the mystery of that revelation. And from then on St. Francis, through his unceasing prayer, began to enjoy more often the sweetness of divine contemplation, by which he was many times rapt in God, so that he was seen by his companions to be lifted bodily from the ground and taken out of himself.

In these contemplative raptures there were revealed to him by God not only things present and future, but even the secret thoughts and desires of the brothers, as his companion Brother Leo experienced in his own case during that time. The said Brother Leo was undergoing a very great diabolical temptation, not of the flesh but of the spirit, and he had a great longing to have a devout saying, written by St. Francis's own hand, and he thought that if he had this, the temptation would leave him, either entirely or in part. But, though he had this desire, he did not dare, out of shame and reverence, to tell St. Francis about it. But he to whom Brother Leo would not reveal it knew about it through the revelation to the Holy Spirit. Therefore St. Francis called Brother Leo to him and told him to bring inkstand, pen and paper, and with his own hand wrote a laud of Christ, and at the end he made the sign of the Tau (the symbol of the Cross) and gave it him, saying: "Take it,

my dearest brother, and keep it carefully until your death. May God bless you and guard you against every temptation. Do not be afraid because you have temptations, for I consider you all the more a servant and friend of God, and I love you the more the more you are assailed by temptations. Truly I tell you that no one can consider himself a perfect friend of God unless he has undergone many temptations and tribulations."

Brother Leo received this writing with great devotion and faith, and immediately every temptation departed from him. Returning to the settlement, he narrated very joyfully to his companions the great grace God had given him to let him receive this writing from the hand of St. Francis. And putting it aside and taking great care of it, the brothers wrought many miracles through it afterwards. From that hour on Brother Leo began, with great purity and good intention, to observe and consider the life of St. Francis. . . .

By the gift of God's grace which was in him, St. Francis was not only rapt to God in ecstatic contemplation, but also sometimes comforted by angelic visions. One day he was thinking of his death and of the state of his Order when his life was spent, and saying: "Lord God, what will become of Thy poor family which in Thy goodness Thou hast confided to me, sinner that I am, after my death? Who will comfort it, who will correct it, who will pray to Thee for it?" And as he continued praying in this manner, there appeared to him the angel sent by God and comforted him, saying: "I tell you from God that the profession of the Order will not fail until the day of judgment . . . and do not grieve if you see a few friars in your Order who are not good and do not observe the Rule as they should, and do not think that the Order will decline through it, for there will always be very many who will live the life of Christ's gospel perfectly and observe the purity of the Rule. . . . But of those who do not observe the Rule at all you should take no heed, says the Lord God, for He takes no heed of them either." And having said these words, the angel departed, and St. Francis remained comforted and consoled.

When the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady was approaching, St. Francis desired to find a more lonely and secret place, where he might be more solitary to keep the forty days' fast of St. Michael the Archangel, which began with the said feast of the Assumption.

So he called Brother Leo and said to him: "Go and stand by the door of the oratory of the brothers' dwelling, and when I call you come back to me." Brother Leo went and stood at the door, and St. Francis went some way further and called loudly. When Brother Leo heard him calling, he went to him, and St. Francis said: "My son, let us look for another place more secret, from where you can no longer hear when I call you."

After searching, they saw on the side of the mountain towards the south a lonely, secret place, very fitted to his purpose, but it was not possible to get there, because in front of it there yawned an awful and horrible chasm in the rock. With great pains they laid a piece of wood across it to bridge it, and so they were able to get to the other side. Then St. Francis sent for the other brothers and told them that he intended to hold the forty days' fast of St. Michael in that solitary spot, and he begged them to make a little cell for him there, for from that place no cry of his could be heard by them. And when the little cell had been made, St. Francis said to them: "Go home to your own place and leave me here in solitude. But you, Brother Leo, come once a day to me with a little bread and water, and once during the night at the hour of Matins. Then come silently, and when you get to the bridge, say *Domine labia mei aperies* (O Lord, open my lips), and if I answer, cross over and come to the cell and we will say Matins together; but if I do not answer, then go away again at once." And St. Francis said this because he was sometimes so rapt to God that he could neither hear nor feel anything with the senses of the body. And having said this, St. Francis gave them his blessing and they returned to their own cells. . . .

Once during those forty days, St. Francis came out of his cell in great fervour of spirit and went to a spot hard by to pray in a hollow of the rock, from which a sheer wall fell down steeply into a fearsome precipice. Suddenly, the devil came in a terrible shape, accompanied by a roaring tempest, and struck at him so as to push him down. There was no place whereto St. Francis could flee for safety and, feeling unable to endure the horrible aspect of the demon, he turned towards the rock, pressing his hands, his face and his whole body against it and, commending himself to God, he groped with his hands in the hope of finding something to cling to. But, as it

pleased God, who never allows His servants to be tempted beyond their strength, by a miracle the stone against which he was leaning suddenly caved in according to the shape of his body and he entered into it, as though he had pressed his hands and face into liquid wax. So the shape of his face and hands was imprinted into the rock, and so, with the help of God, he escaped from the devil. . . .

Now as St. Francis was keeping the fast, as we have said, although he had to sustain many assaults of the devil, he nevertheless received many consolations from God, not only through angelic visitations, but also by wild birds. During all that time a falcon, who was nesting near to St. Francis's cell, waked him every night a little before Matins with its song and with beating its wings, and would not go away until the Saint had got up to say Matins. And when St. Francis was more weary than usual, or weak or infirm, that falcon, like a discreet and compassionate person, would sing a little later. St. Francis took great pleasure in this holy timepiece, for the falcon's solicitude averted all slothfulness from him and called him to prayer, and, furthermore, the bird came to sit beside him tamely during the day. Finally . . . when St. Francis was much weakened in his body, both by his great abstinence and by the struggles with the demons, he desired to comfort his body with the spiritual food of the soul; he began to think of the infinite glory and joy of the blessed spirits in eternal life, and he prayed God to allow him to assuage his longing with a little of that joy. And while he was wrapped in such thoughts, suddenly an angel appeared to him with great splendour, holding a viol in his left hand and a bow in his right. As St. Francis was gazing in amazement at this angel, he drew the bow once across the viol, and suddenly such ineffable sweetness of melody flooded the soul of St. Francis that his bodily senses were suspended. As he later told his companions, he wondered whether, if the angel had drawn the bow across the viol downwards, the sweetness would not have been so intolerable that his soul would have fled from his body.



## LVII

*How St. Francis received the glorious Stigmata of Christ.*

In September, when the Feast of the most Holy Cross was drawing near, Brother Leo set out one night at the accustomed hour to say Matins with St. Francis. According to his usage, he said *Domine labia mei aperies* on reaching the bridge, but St. Francis did not answer. Brother Leo did not turn back, as St. Francis had bidden him, but crossed the bridge with good and holy intentions and went softly into the cell. Not finding St. Francis there, he thought that he must have gone into the wood to pray, so he went out and began to search the wood in the moonlight. At last he heard St. Francis's voice, and, approaching, he saw him kneeling with his face and his hands raised up to heaven, and saying with great fervour of spirit: "Who art Thou, O my most sweet God? And what am I, a wretched worm, Thy useless servant?" He went on repeating these words, saying nothing else.

Brother Leo was much amazed at this and, as he lifted his eyes to look at the sky, he saw coming down from heaven a beautiful and splendid flame, which alighted on the head of St. Francis; and out of the flame he heard a voice speaking to St. Francis, but Brother Leo could not understand the words it said. Seeing this and deeming himself unworthy to stand so close to that holy place, where such a marvellous apparition was shown, fearing also to offend St. Francis and disturb him in his consolation if he made his presence heard, Brother Leo withdrew softly and, standing at some little distance, he waited to see how it would end.

As he gazed, he saw St. Francis stretch out his hands three times towards the flame, and finally, after a long time, he saw the flame return to the sky. Then he began to move, sure of the vision he had seen and rejoicing at it, and turned towards his cell. And as he was thus walking with a firm step, St. Francis heard him by the rustling of the leaves under his feet, and commanded him to wait and not to move. Then Brother Leo stopped obediently, and waited for him with such fear that, as he later told his companions, he would at that moment have preferred the earth to open and swallow him than to have to wait for St. Francis, who, as he thought, was displeased

with him. For with the greatest care he watched against offending the father, lest by his fault St. Francis should deprive him of his company.

When St. Francis had reached him, he asked: "Who are you?" And Brother Leo answered in fear and trembling: "I am Brother Leo, my father." And St. Francis said to him: "Why did you come here, Brother Little Sheep? Did I not tell you not to come watching me? Tell me by holy obedience whether you heard or saw anything?" Brother Leo answered: "Father, I heard you speak and say several times 'Who art Thou, O my most sweet God, and who am I, a wretched worm, Thy useless servant?' " And then Brother Leo, kneeling down before St. Francis, accused himself of the sin of disobedience for not having kept his commandment and asked his forgiveness with many tears. Then he entreated him to explain the words he had heard, and told him those he had not understood.

Then, as St. Francis saw that God had seen fit to allow the humble Brother Leo to see certain things because of his simplicity and purity, he condescended to reveal and explain what he wanted to know, saying: "Know, Brother Little Sheep of Jesus Christ, that when I said those words which you heard, two lights were being shown to my soul, one of the knowledge and understanding of the Creator, the other of the knowledge and understanding of myself. When I said: 'Who art Thou, O my sweetest God?' I was in a light of contemplation, in which I saw the abyss of the infinite goodness, wisdom and power of God. And when I said 'What am I, etc.' I was in a light of contemplation in which I saw the pitiful depth of my own wretchedness and misery. And therefore I said: 'Who art Thou, Lord of infinite goodness and wisdom and power, that Thou dost deign to visit me, who am a vile and abominable worm?' And in that flame which you saw, there was God who spoke to me under that form, as He spoke in olden times to Moses. And among other things He said to me, He asked me to make three gifts . . . holy obedience, highest poverty and resplendent chastity. . . . These are the words which you heard, and the threefold raising of the hands that you saw. But take care, Brother Little Sheep, that you do not go watching me again, and go back to your cell with the blessing of God. . . ."

On the day of the most Holy Cross, St. Francis . . . was contemplating most devoutly the Passion of Christ and His infinite

charity, and the fervour of his devotion was so great that everything was transformed into Jesus through love and through compassion. And as he was thus inflamed in contemplation, that same morning he saw coming from heaven a seraph with resplendent, burning wings . . . who had in himself the image of a man crucified . . . [From here we follow the short Latin text of the *Floretum*] and imprinted the marks of the nails on his hands and feet, and the wound in his side, as the legend tells us. The marvellous apparition illuminated the night, so that all the mountains and valleys could be as clearly discerned as at noon. For this we have the testimony of the shepherds who were tending their flocks in that neighbourhood. We do not yet know for what reason St. Francis received the imprint of the glorious Stigmata, but as he himself said to his companions, it foreshadows a great mystery to come. Brother Jacomo of Massa received this story from the lips of Brother Leo; and Brother Ugolino de Monte S. Maria received it from the lips of the said Brother Jacomo. The present writer has it from Brother Ugolino, a most reliable man.

#### LVII a (55)

#### *How St. Francis took his leave from Mount Alverna.*

The great and holy father resolved to bid good-bye to the holy mountain on the 30th day of September 1224, the feast of St. Hieronymus. The Count Orlando, Count of Chiusi, had sent a sumpter beast so that he might ride, for he could not put his feet to the ground because they were pierced by the nails. In the morning, when he had heard Mass at St. Mary of the Angels (on the mountain) according to his usage, he called the friars together in the oratory and commanded them by holy obedience to observe mutual charity, to attend diligently to their orisons and to take great care of the aforementioned place, saying the office there night and day. Then he commended the whole of the holy mountain to them, exhorting all present and future friars never to allow that place to be profaned, but always to be held in respect and reverence, and he blessed all those who should dwell there, and all those who would respect and reverence it. . . . To me he said: "Know, Brother Masseo, that it is my intention that on this mountain should dwell religious who

are Godfearing, the best who are in my Order, and the superiors shall strive to send only the best of the brethren here. Ah, ah, ah, Brother Masseo, I will say no more."

Then he commanded me, Brother Masseo, and Brother Angelo, Brother Silvester and Brother Illuminato, to take especial care of the spot where that great miracle of the impression of the holy Stigmata took place. When he had said this, he exclaimed: "A Dio, a Dio, a Dio,<sup>1</sup> Brother Masseo!" Then he turned to Brother Angelo, saying: "A Dio, a Dio," and likewise he said to Brother Silvester and Brother Illuminato: "Stay in peace, my dearest sons, a Dio! I am going from you with my body, but I leave you my heart. I am going away with Brother Little Sheep of God and I am going to St. Mary of the Angels, and never will I return here. I am departing, a Dio, a Dio, a Dio, all of you! A Dio, holy mountain, a Dio, Mount Alverna, a Dio, Mount of the Angels! A Dio, O dearest brother falcon, I thank you for the charity with which you used me. A Dio, a Dio, towering rock, never again will I come to visit you! A Dio, a Dio, a Dio, rock that received me in your bowels, leaving the devil thwarted, never more will I see you again! A Dio, St. Mary of the Angels, I commend to you these sons of mine, Mother of the eternal Word!"

While our dear father was saying these words, rivers of tears poured from our eyes, and then he left, weeping also and taking our hearts with him, leaving us others orphans by the loss of such a father.

I, Brother Masseo, have written this with tears. May God bless us.

<sup>1</sup> Adieu, farewell.

## Laude (I)

### INTRODUCTORY

SAINT FRANCIS'S OWN writings will be better understood in their originality and unique quality against the background of his life. But although he saw his mission in preaching the glad tidings and occasionally burst into song and wrote true religious poetry, and despite the many books his enthusiastic disciples wrote about him, he himself never laid any claims to literary fame. He always considered himself as a poor little friar, an *idiot*, as he used to say, which means one unlettered in clerical as well as secular learning. Even the poem to which he owes his fame as a poet would not have passed the test of severe professional criticism in his own day, nor could it do so to-day. It flows on in free rhythms and, instead of the rhymes of the professional *joglar* of the period, we find merely assonances. However, this is a case where it is proved that professional "school" criticism has a very limited importance. St. Francis himself used to say that we must honour the schools—but we know that the spirit bloweth where it listeth, and none can say whence it comes nor whither it goes.

Nothing has come down to us of the songs St. Francis used to sing in the fullness of his heart, imitating the rhythms of the wandering minstrels from Provence and using their language; these improvisations would be caused by a joyous outburst of the love of God or by deep compassion for the sufferings of Christ, and it is evident that the companion, who was the only one to hear them, never thought of writing them down.

Yet it is a different matter if religious poetry can be used in the interests of the "mission". The example for this is the *Canticle of Brother Sun* (No. 1) which came to the saint at the moment when he felt relieved of a heavy spiritual burden. He sang it to Sister Clare and her companions, so as to give them pleasure, and in the end he found that the poem could serve a spiritual purpose.

Strangely enough, the *Canticle of Brother Sun* is the only text of which we know for certain that it was conceived in the "sweet tongue" of St. Francis's Umbria. It has come down to us in the

old orthography, though not, like some other texts, in the Saint's own handwriting. Unfortunately we no longer know the tune to which it was sung. It is possible that it was partly inspired by the "Psalm of the three youths in the fiery furnace". According to the notes of Brother Leo and his companions, supplemented by the later notes of Bartholomew of Pisa, St. Francis wrote his "psalm" during the summer or autumn of 1225, when he was staying in a hut of branches which St. Clare had prepared for him in the garden of San Damiano during the period of his "grave infirmity".

One day he suddenly felt that the load of his sufferings had been marvellously lightened, and he thought that he would not have been distressed at all if he had only had the right faith. From that moment the state of his health and of his spirits improved from day to day. It is possible that, when the sun was sinking behind the olive-trees, the sisters may have heard the long-drawn-out notes of a song, such as the country-folk sang in the evening when they returned from the fields, issuing from the rough shelter they had erected for their spiritual father. The Lady Clare must have been happy at this sign that the crisis was over. One day St. Francis came and, after a spiritual conversation with his saintly friend, partook of their meal in the refectory. We can still look to-day at the rough board on which it was served. As soon as grace had been said, he began, like a true minstrel of the Lord, to sing: "*Laudato si, mio Signore. . .*"

It was his best song, and when he saw how it moved those who listened, he would have liked to send a chosen group of friars as minstrels into the world, to assemble the people in the streets and on the squares and to sing that song, demanding no other remuneration than what he called "penitence"—that is to say a change of heart.

According to Brother Leo, St. Francis sent yet another song to St. Clare and her companions, but, unfortunately, like most of the letters exchanged between the two saints, it has been lost.

Among the other writings of St. Francis which can lay claim to poetic form and inspiration, a number of religious poems, *Laude* or lauds, have been preserved. He wrote them down, for the edification of the brethren in all countries, in Latin, the language he always employed when he wished to give his words a more or less official authority. This also holds good in individual cases, where he admonished or comforted them in the name of Christ. An example is the consoling letter to Brother Leo (III, 68) and the blessing and praise for the same which he set down on Mount

Alverna in 1224, still under the impression of his great experience. This has been preserved in the actual hand of the Saint. (No. 8). The letter "to a Superior" (possibly Brother Elias?) written in 1223, of which a part is of general interest (No. 9), is also preserved in the original manuscript. We have already mentioned the extant fragments of his letters to St. Clare.(2)

Naturally the salutary admonitions which St. Francis addressed, in his function as General of the Order, to the community, are primarily pastoral in character. It is self-evident that the two Rules cannot be quoted in their entirety in a literary anthology. They were intended to serve a specific purpose for the Order, and it is not even sure how much of the text was actually indited by the Saint himself. The original Rule of 1210 is only preserved in fragments in occasional quotations of St. Francis's companions.(3) The main substance, continually re-edited by the yearly Chapters, merged into the Rule of 1221, which in its turn was followed by the *Regula bullata* of 1223, founded on a new version made by the Saint and emended, according to the suggestion of the ministers, by Cardinal Ugolino and Pope Honorius.

Some of the texts accompanying the main paragraphs of the Rule, as well as blessings and admonitions of a general nature, are very characteristic of the Saint's mentality and of his style. The *Beatitudes* (No. 2) are found in these *verba admonitionis* which were pronounced at the assemblies of the Chapter; they are a paraphrase of the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, and their inwardness and spiritual beauty convey something of the true Franciscan spirit with its insistence on the virtues of poverty, humility and charity.

The same can be said of the *Praise of the Virtues* (Nos. 3 to 4) whose praises of the personifications of "Queen Wisdom" and "Lady Poverty" charm us with their originality and grace. The paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer (No. 5) is obviously genuine, both as regards style and language, though one extant manuscript suggests the possibility that Brother Giles was its author.

St. Francis's apostolic side is characterized by the *Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving* (No. 6) where the praises of the Lord are united with a call "to all men to awaken". These emotional outbursts are not what one expects to find in a monastic rule. They have no precision, no legal brevity. They are the eruptions of glowing lava of an ardent soul, beginning with stammering words of humility, then spreading out with a flood of exhortations that throws up wave after wave of enthusiasm. There is something

pathetically childlike in this optimistic hope of "world conquest", but one must not forget that the powers that shake the world were always driven rather by the flames of faith than by the cold forces of logic.

A notable testimony of the early Franciscan spirit is to be found in the *Sermon for the People* (No. 7) which is also to be found in the Rule of 1221. The first friars, who were not in Holy Orders, had petitioned for the licence to "preach repentance" and received it, and this is, in a manner of speaking, their programme. Nothing could be more simple, and again the power comes from within.

I (4)

THE CANTICLE OF BROTHER SUN

(Written in summer or autumn, 1225)

Most high, omnipotent, merciful Lord,  
Thine is all praise, the honour and the glory and every benediction  
To Thee alone are they confined  
And no man is worthy to speak Thy Name.

Praised be Thou, my Lord, with all Thy creatures,  
Especially for Sir Brother Sun.  
Through him Thou givest us the light of day,  
And he is fair and radiant with great splendour,  
Of Thee, most High, giving signification.

Praised be Thou, my Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars  
Formed in the sky, clear, beautiful and fair.

Praised be Thou, my Lord, for Brother Wind,  
For air, for weather cloudy and serene and every weather  
By which Thou to Thy creatures givest sustenance.

Praised be Thou, my Lord, for Sister Water  
Who is very useful and humble, precious and chaste.

Praised be Thou, my Lord, for Brother Fire  
By whom Thou dost illuminate the night  
Beauteous is he and jocund, robustious and strong.



Praised be Thou, my Lord, for our Mother Earth  
Who sustains and rules us  
And brings forth divers fruits and coloured flowers and herbs.  
Praised be Thou, my Lord, for those who grant forgiveness through  
Thy love  
And suffer infirmities and tribulation.  
Blessed are they who bear them with resignation,  
Because by Thee, most High, they will be crowned.

Praised be Thou, my Lord, for our brother bodily Death  
From whom no living man can ever 'scape.  
Woe unto those who die in mortal sin.  
Blessed those who are found in Thy most holy will,  
To them the second death will bring no ill.

Praise and bless my Lord, render thanks to Him  
And serve Him with great humility.

2 (5)

THE BEATITUDES

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.—  
There are many who insist on orisons and offices, and they endure much abstinence and inflict many mortifications on their bodies; but for a single word that appears to injure their persons, or for any thing that is taken away from them, they are at once greatly scandalized and perturbed. These are not poor in spirit; for those who are truly poor in spirit have a hatred of their own self and love those who strike them on the cheek.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.—Those are the true peacemakers who endure all things in this world for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ and are at peace in their soul and in their body.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.—Those are the pure in heart who despise earthly things and seek heavenly things, and do not fail to pray, and see our Lord God, the Life and the Truth, with their spirit and their pure heart.

Blessed the servant who does not exalt himself, nor rejoice more at the good which God speaks and does through him than at that He speaks and does through others. That man sins who would receive more from his neighbour than he himself is willing to give to God.

Blessed the man who bears with his neighbour's frailty and weakness, in which he would be maintained and supported by him.

Blessed the servant who renders all his goods to God, because he who keeps back anything in himself, hides in himself the riches of the Lord; and that which he deems he has will be taken from him.

Blessed the servant who does not think himself better when he is praised and magnified and exalted by men than when they hold him for meek and despicable, because a man is as much as he is before God, and no more.

Woe to the religious who is elevated by others, and by his own vainglory and will refuses to abase himself and come down from his high place. And blessed the one who is elevated against his will, and ever desires to be beneath the feet of the others.

Blessed the religious who has no other happiness nor joy than in the most holy words of God, and therewith provokes and leads men to the love of God in joy and happiness. And woe to the religious who delights in vain and idle words, and therewith provokes and leads men to contempt.

Blessed the servant who does not speak with the hope of gaining human reward, who does not reveal all his secrets and is not fluent of speech, but foresees wisely what he should say and answer.

Woe to the religious who does not conceal in his heart the favours God has given him, and does not manifest them to others by his deeds, but, in the hope of gaining a reward, desires to show them to everyone; for in that he has already had his reward, and those who hear him will have little fruit thereof.

Blessed the servant who, when he is reprimanded and accused, bears the reprimands and accusations of others as patiently as though they came from himself.

Blessed the servant who receives a reprimand gently, obeys with shame and confesses humbly, and gives satisfaction gladly.

Blessed the servant who is not fluent at excusing himself, and

humbly bears the shame and reproof of the sin which he has not committed.

Blessed the religious who is found as humble among his inferiors as when he was among his superiors and lords.

Blessed the servant who ever remains under the rod of correction.

Faithful and wise is the servant who does not hesitate to do penance after his confession and to give satisfaction for his misdeed. Blessed the servant who loves his brother as much when he is sick as when he is well. And blessed he who loves his brother as much when he is far away as when he is by his side, and will never say anything behind his back which he could not say charitably to his face.

Blessed the servant who has faith in the clerics who live according to the manner of the Holy Roman Church, and woe to those who despise them. And even if they should be sinners, none should judge them, because God alone has reserved the right to judge them. Because their office is greater than all else, being to receive the most holy Body and Blood of Christ Jesus our Lord, and they alone give it to others, therefore their sin is greater in them than in all the other men in this world.

### 3 (6)

## OF THE POWER OF THE VIRTUES

(1210-1221)

Where there is true charity and wisdom, there is no fear nor ignorance.

Where there is poverty with gladness, there is neither cupidity nor avarice.

Where there is the peace and the memory of God, there is no unrest nor roaming.

Where the fear of God watches over palace and house, there the enemy can find no loophole to enter.

Where there is mercy and discretion, there is neither extravagance nor deceit.

4 (7)

PRAISES OF THE VIRTUES WITH WHICH THE  
MOST HOLY VIRGIN WAS ADORNED AND  
WHICH SHOULD ADORN THE HOLY SOUL

Hail, Queen Wisdom, God save thee with thy holy sister pure simplicity.

Hail, Lady holy Poverty, God save thee with thy holy sister humility.

Hail, Lady holy Charity, God save thee with thy sister, holy obedience.

Hail, all you holy virtues, may God save you, He from whom you come and are derived.

There is not a man in the world who could possess even one of your number unless he first has died. He who possesses one and does not offend the others, possesses them all, but he who violates even one, possesses none at all and violates them all.

Each virtue routs vice and sin, covering them with confusion. Holy Wisdom confounds Satan and all his malice. Pure holy simplicity confounds all the wisdom of this world and of the body. Holy poverty confounds the cupidity, the avarice and the cares of this life. Holy humility confounds all arrogance, all the men who live for this world and likewise all things that are of the world. Holy charity confounds all temptations of the flesh and the devil, and all fear of the flesh. Holy obedience confounds all corporal and carnal desires and keeps a man's body mortified, so that he may obey the spirit and obey his brother, and be subject and submissive to all men in the world; and not to men alone, but also to all animals and wild beasts, so that they can do with him what they will, so far as is permitted to them by the Lord on high. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hail O holy Lady, most holy Queen, Mother of God, Mary, thou who art everlastingly Virgin, chosen by the most holy Father in Heaven and consecrated by Him with His most holy and beloved Son and with the Holy Ghost our Comforter, thou in whom there is and has been all fullness of grace and every good.

Hail, palace of Christ; hail, tabernacle of Christ, hail, Mother of Christ! Hail to you, holy virtues, who by means of grace and the illumination of the Holy Ghost are infused in the hearts of the faithful, so that from having been infidels, they may become members of the faith.

## 5 (8)

## EXPOSITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, our most blessed, most holy Creator, our Saviour and our Comforter; who art in heaven, in the angels, in the saints, enlightening them to know Thee; because Thou, O Lord, art the light that inflames them by Thy divine love; because Thou, O Lord, art the love which is in them and fills them to render them blessed; because Thou, O Lord, art the highest good, and the eternal good, from which all good things come, and without which there is no good anywhere.

Hallowed be Thy name: let the knowledge of Thee become apparent to us, so that we may know how plentiful are Thy blessings, how long Thy promises, how lofty Thy majesty, how profound Thy judgments.

Thy kingdom come; that Thou shouldst reign within us with Thy grace and let us come to Thy kingdom, where we will see Thee face to face, and have perfect love, blessed company and sempiternal joy.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; so that we may love Thee with all our heart, thinking ever of Thee; with all our soul ever desiring Thee; with all our mind, directing all our intentions to Thee, and seeking Thy honour in all things; and with all our strength, employing all the power of our spirit and all the senses of our body in the service of Thy love, and in naught else: and that we may also love our neighbours as ourselves, drawing all men, as far as it is in our power, towards Thy love, rejoicing in the good things of others and grieving at their ills as at our own, and never giving offence to anyone.

Give us this day our daily bread, that is Thy Beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in memory of the love He bore us, and of what He said, did and suffered for us.

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and what we do not forgive entirely, make Thou, O Lord, that we should forgive, so that for Thy sake we should sincerely love our enemies, and intercede devoutly for them with Thee, and never render evil for evil, and strive with Thy help to be of assistance to all men.

And lead us not into temptation, hidden or manifest, sudden or protracted.

And deliver us from evil, past, present and future.

So be it, with good will and without hope of reward.<sup>1</sup>

## 6 (9)

### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND EXHORTATION

(1210-1221)

Almighty, most holy, most high and greatest God, holy Father and just Lord, King of heaven and earth; we thank Thee for Thyself, who through Thy most holy will and Thy only-begotten Son and the Holy Ghost hast created all spiritual and corporal things, and hast made us in Thy image and similarity, and set us into paradise, and by our own fault have we fallen.

And we render thanks to Thee, because, as Thou hast created us through Thy Son, Thou hast also by the great love which Thou didst have for us, made Him incarnate as true God and true man in the glorious Virgin the most blessed St. Mary, and hast redeemed us from slavery by the cross and the blood and the death of Thy Son.

We also render thanks to Thee because this same holy Son of Thine will come again in the glory of His majesty to send to the eternal flames the accursed ones who would not do penance and did not know Thee, and to say to all those who knew and adored Thee and served Thee by penitence: "Come, you who My Father has blessed, inherit the kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

And because we all, miserable sinners, are not worthy to utter Thy name, we pray and entreat Thee that our Lord Jesus Christ,

<sup>1</sup> *gratuitamente*—gratuitously.

Thy beloved Son, together with the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, should give thanks to Thee for all things, as it will please Thee and Him, for He ever suffices to Thee, and through Him Thou hast done so much for us. Alleluja.

To all those who would serve the Lord God in the bosom of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church . . . we, all the Brothers Minor, useless servants that we are, address this prayer and supplication, that we may all persevere in true faith and penitence, for otherwise no one can be saved. We all love with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and strength, with all our intellect and all our vigour, with all our efforts, with all our emotions, with all our bowels, with all our desires and our will the Lord God, who gave and gives each one of us the whole of our body, the whole of our soul, the whole of our life; who has created us, and redeemed us, and saved us by His mercy alone; who to us pitiable and miserable, putrid and fetid, ungrateful, ignorant and wicked men has given and does give so many blessings.

Let us therefore desire nothing else, want nothing else, take pleasure or delight in anything else than in our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Saviour, the true and only God, who is full of good, who is all good, the true and highest good; who alone is good, kind and meek, sweet and gentle; who alone is holy, just, true and trustworthy, who alone is benign, innocent and pure; from whom, through whom and in whom is all forgiveness, all grace, all glory of all the penitent and just, and of all the blessed who rejoice in heaven together.

Let therefore nothing hinder us, nothing separate us, nothing disturb us. Let us in every place, at every hour and every time, daily and continually have true and humble faith, and hold in our hearts, and love, honour, adore, serve, praise and bless, glorify and exalt over all things, magnify and thank the highest, greatest and eternal God, the Trinity and the Unity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, the creator of all things, He who rewards those who believe and hope in Him and love Him; He who is without beginning and without end, immutable and invisible, indescribable, ineffable, incomprehensible, inscrutable, blessed, praiseworthy, glorious, exalted, sublime, sweet, amiable, delightful and entirely and always desirable above all things for all eternity.

7 (10)

EXAMPLE OF A SERMON TO THE PEOPLE

(1210-1221)

All my brothers may, with God's blessing, announce whenever they please and to any sort of person the following exhortation and praise:

Fear and honour, praise and bless, thank and adore the Lord God omnipotent, three in one, Father and Son and Holy Ghost, creator of all things. Repent ye and bring forth fruits meet for repentance, for you must know that we die quickly. Give, and it shall be given unto you. Forgive, and you will be forgiven, but if you do not forgive, the Lord will not forgive your sins either. Confess all your sins. Blessed are those who die repentant, for they will be admitted into the kingdom of heaven. Woe unto those who die unrepentant, for they will be children of the devil whose works they imitate, and will be thrown into the everlasting fire.

Watch therefore, and abstain from all evil, and persevere in doing good unto the end.

8 (11)

BLESSING OF ST. FRANCIS FOR BROTHER LEO  
WITH THE PRAISE OF GOD, THE HIGHEST LORD

(September 1224)

Two years before his death, when Blessed Francis stayed on Mount Alverna and fasted forty days in honour of the blessed Virgin and Mother Mary and of St. Michael Archangel, from the feast of the Assumption to the feast of St. Michael in September, he was touched by the hand of the Lord in a vision and locution of the Seraph and by the impression of the Stigmata on his body.

He wrote the laud on this paper with his own hand, desiring to thank the Lord for the grace he had received.



*Benediction:*

"The Lord bless you and keep you; may He show you His face and have pity on you. Let Him turn His face towards you and give you peace.

The Lord bless you, Brother Leo.

T

("tau"—the symbol of the Cross which St. Francis used as his sign instead of a signature.)

[*On the back of the paper, likewise in St. Francis's own hand.*]

Thou art holy, Lord and God, Thou art the God of gods, the God that doest wonders.

Thou art strong, Thou art great, Thou art the highest, Thou art almighty. Thou art the holy Father, king of heaven and earth. Thou art three in one, king of kings.

Thou art good, Thou art the only good and the highest good, the one and true Lord God. Thou art love and charity, Thou art wisdom, Thou art humility, Thou art patience; Thou art beauty, Thou art security; Thou art rest, Thou art joy.

Thou art our hope and our gladness; Thou art justice and temperance, Thou art strength and prudence, Thou art riches and sufficiency.

Thou art meekness. Thou art our defender, our guardian and protector, Thou art our shield, our refuge and our virtue.

Thou art our faith, hope and charity, Thou art our greatest delight. Thou art infinite goodness, great and admirable. O my Lord, almighty, merciful God and Saviour.

9 (12)

LETTER FROM BLESSED FRANCIS TO A SUPERIOR

(1223)

May God bless you.

I say to you as best I can, for your soul's sake, that those things which hinder you in loving the Lord God, and all men who thus hinder you, be they friars or others, even if they should strike you,

all those things you should look upon as a grace, and will them thus and no different.

And love those who do these things to you, and desire nothing different from them than what the Lord sends you. And show them your love by wishing them to be better Christians.

And in this I would know whether you love God, and me, His servant and yours, that you would act as follows: that you should not allow a single brother in the world, whatever sin he may have committed, to come before your eyes and depart without having found mercy with you. And if he should not ask mercy of you, then you must ask it of him. And if he were to come before you a thousand times, love him more than you love me, so that you should lead him back on to the right way, and always have mercy for all who sin.

And make this known to all guardians when you can, that you are firmly resolved to do this. . . .

# The Testament

## INTRODUCTORY

The Testament is, after *The Canticle of Brother Sun*, the most precious document of St. Francis which we possess; not perhaps from a purely literary point of view, but as regards the revelation it gives of the Saint's real nature and the light it throws on the struggles for the maintenance of the strict observance of poverty which overshadowed his last years. Sabatier (13) calls it "the most solemn manifestation of his ideas", and Cuthbert "his confession of faith in the religious ideal which he and his brethren were called to serve".

The simplicity of the language, the very awkwardness of his Latin style and of his transitions from one idea to another, and the grave sincerity of this text is no less characteristic of the Saint's human personality than *The Canticle of Brother Sun*, and it is no less beautiful despite its lack of all "literary" qualities.

The Testament owed its inception to a tragic situation, and subsequently passed through no less distressing vicissitudes. This document was dictated by the conflict between religious submission to men wielding the authority of the Church and religious obedience to the divine voice, the voice of his own conscience. It was not the conflict of the Maid of Orleans, with the faggots heaped for the final martyrdom, but a process of slow disintegration no less painful.

The Saint describes his spiritual development from the time he first received the "call" to the moment when he clearly saw what the plan of his life with the brethren must be, and on this he founds his last will and testament, and pens his last message to his disciples, asking them to do his bidding for the sake of what he had been to them before God. For he knew very well—and even his closest friends and companions had to confirm it (14)—that he had no legal right to command any longer. For that reason he spoke with all the solemnity he could muster, in the name of Christ; so at least he could relieve his conscience, whether his advice would be accepted or not. "He had done what he could for the future," says Jörgensen.

Immediately doubts arose as to how far his *Testament* must be looked upon as binding. For this reason Gregory IX gave an official explanation of the *Testament* in 1230, in the constitution called *Quo elongati*.<sup>(15)</sup> The Pope refers to his long friendship and familiarity with the Saint, and his knowledge of Blessed Francis's true intentions, and declares that the *Testament* of the Founder of the Order is not binding without the sanction of the General Chapter; and as everybody knew, the latter had not contributed to it. That is all that could be said from the legal point of view. Obviously, it had not clinched the argument as to St. Francis's religious ideals and the spirit in which he led the Order from the beginning to the end of his life. The Saint's familiar companions, and the later Spirituals, felt themselves bound by the *Testament* and demanded the right to follow it *pure et sine glossa*, as true sons of St. Francis. Ubertino of Casale defended their cause with eloquence and theological learning, but the majority in the Order took offence at this attitude, and in some places it actually happened that the *Testament* was burnt—once even on the head of a Spiritual.<sup>(16)</sup> Bonaventure makes no mention of the *Testament* at all, not even in his *Apologia of the Poor*. Truly, "in my father's house there are many mansions". From a purely formal point of view, the *Testament* can neither be included in the *Lauds* nor in a literary anthology as such. But what matter? In my opinion, it constitutes St. Francis's last farewell to the Lady Poverty, the mystic bride of his life-long love. In the Bible of Franciscanism it takes the place of the revelation of the religious warrior, just as the *Cantic of Brother Sun* is the revelation of the religious poet. They belong together, like the Sermon on the Mount and the last prophecies of Jesus. But here as there they were separated by a long and difficult way which, seen from the human angle, was beset by disappointed hopes.

The fact that the life of the Little Poor Man ended similarly to that of his Master constitutes another, and the profoundest, similarity between him and his exemplar. And in his imitation of Christ the "poor little friar" wins a place in our hearts unrivalled by any other saint in the history of Christendom. We love him for the *Cantic of Brother Sun*, but when we read the *Testament*, we must venerate him. Its beauty is that of sanctity, which cannot be measured by aesthetic canons.

As Pascal says: "Men of genius have their empire, their splendour, their victory, their shining light and have no need of material greatness with which they have no connection. The saints have

their empire, their splendour, their victory, their shining light and have no need of material or spiritual greatness, with which they have no connection, neither adding thereto nor detracting from them. . . . This is in an infinitely more elevated order."

## THE TESTAMENT (17)

(Written between May and September 1226)

The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, the grace to begin to do penance in this manner: because I walked in sin, it seemed all too bitter to me to look upon lepers, but the Lord led me among them, and with them I practised the quality of mercy. And when I departed from them, that which had seemed so bitter to me was converted into sweetness of mind and body. Then I delayed a short while, and abandoned the world.

And the Lord gave me such faith in His churches that I adored Him in all simplicity and said: "We adore Thee, most holy Lord Jesus Christ, who art in all the churches of the world, and we bless Thee, because by Thy holy Cross thou hast redeemed the world."

Furthermore the Lord gave me and gives me such faith in the priests who live according to the form of the Holy Roman Church, in respect to their Orders, that even if they should persecute me, I would have recourse to them. And if I were to have as much wisdom as Solomon and were to find poor secular priests, I would not preach in their parishes against their will. And I will fear them and all the others, love and honour them as my masters; and I will not see any sin in them, because I see in them the Son of God, and I look upon them as my masters. This I do, because I can see nothing else with my bodily eyes in this world of the most high Son of God save His most holy Body and Blood, which they consecrate and they alone administer to others. And I wish that these most holy mysteries be honoured above all other things and venerated and placed in precious places. . . . And we must honour and venerate all theologians and those that announce the most holy words of God, as those who administer to us the Life and the Spirit.

And after the Lord had given me the care of the brethren and there was none to show me what I should do, He the Highest

revealed to me that I must live according to the rule of the Holy Gospel. This I had written down in few and simple words, and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me. And those who came to embrace this way of life divided among the poor all they possessed, and they were content with a single tunic, patched inside and out (those who wanted it), with a cord and a pair of breeches, and they did not desire to have anything more.

Those of us who were clerics said the office like other clerics, and the laymen said the Paternosters. And very happily we stayed in poor and abandoned churches, and we were ignorant and subject to all men. And I worked with my hands and still wish to work; and it is my firm will that all the other brothers should do some manual labour which belongs to an honest way of life. And those who do not know how to work should learn; not out of cupidity to receive the price of their labour, but in order to give a good example, and to banish idleness. And if we should not be given the reward for our labour, then let us have recourse to the bounty of the Lord and beg our bread from door to door. The Lord has revealed to me that we should employ this salutation: "The Lord give you peace."

Let the brethren beware that they do not accept, in any manner whatever, any church, habitation or other thing constructed for them, unless it conforms to the observance of holy poverty which we have vowed in our Rule, ever taking shelter like wanderers and strangers.

I strictly command by holy obedience that all brethren, wherever they may be, should beware of asking for any letters [of privilege] from the Court of Rome, either themselves or through another person, neither for a church nor for any other place, neither under the pretext that it is needed for preaching or to escape the persecution of their persons. But if they should not be received in any place, let them flee elsewhere and do penance there with the blessing of God.

And I will strictly obey the Minister General of this Fraternity and the guardian he pleases to assign to me; and I desire to be placed into his hands in such a manner that I may not go anywhere or do anything against his will, because he is my master . . .

And do not let the brothers say "This is another Rule", because this is a reminder, an admonition and an exhortation, and my last

will and testament, which I, your lowly little brother Francis, make for you, my blessed brothers, so that we should in true Catholic fashion better observe the rule which we have promised to observe before the Lord.

And the Minister General, and all the other Ministers and Custodians shall be held by holy obedience to add nothing to these words nor to take anything away from them. And let them always carry this writing with them, together with the Rule, and in all the Chapters they will hold let them read these words as well when they read the Rule.

And to all my brethren, clerics and laymen, I strictly command by holy obedience that they shall make no gloss to the Rule or to these words, saying "Thus we want them to be understood". But as the Lord has given me the grace to write the Rule and these words purely and simply, you are to understand them just as purely and simply without any gloss, and observe them by saintly deeds unto the end.

And whoever shall observe these things, will be filled with the blessing of the highest Heavenly Father in heaven, and on earth with the blessing of His beloved Son and the most holy Paraclete, with all the Virtues of the heavens and all the Saints.

And I, Brother Francis your most lowly servant in the Lord, as far as I can, confirm you inwardly and outwardly in this most holy blessing. So be it.

# Notes

## PREFACE

- (1) Compare W. Goetz, *Assisi*, 1909.
- (2) V. A. Cristofani, *Delle Storie di Assisi*, 1885; A. Fortini, *Nova vita di S. Francesco*, 1926; L. Salvatorelli, *Storia d'Italia*, IV: *L'Italia comunale*, Milan.
- (3) *Legend of the Three Companions*, 8; Bonaventure, *Legenda maior*, I.2.
- (4) V. Fortini, p. 72.
- (5) V. Fortini, p. 30.
- (6) l.c., 440.
- (7) l.c., 127, 414.
- (8) Bonaventure, l.c., 3, 5.
- (9) G. Mestica, *S. Francesco, Dante e Giotto*, 1926, 11.
- (10) V. *Intentio reg.* (*Doc. ant. fr.*, I), No. 3.
- (11) V. H. Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter*, 1935, p. 164.
- (12) Mestica, 17.
- (13) *First Life of Celano*, I, 12.
- (14) V. the *Testament of St. Francis* (Boehmer, *Anal.*, No. 4 p. 25); *Leg. Perugina*, par. 17; Grundmann, 154.
- (15) V. Fortini.
- (16) "Holy Church herself will imitate our poverty . . . and the holy observance of the Gospel will flower unceasingly before her face" (*Speculum*, 78). This important pronouncement has not received sufficient attention from the biographers.
- (17) V. H. Felder, *Die Ideale des hl. Franz*: 1923, 142, 168. S. Brettle, *Aus dem Minoritenorden*, (*Roma aeterna*, VI), 1926, 9. Compare T. Soiron, *Die Armutsideale des hl. Franz* (*Franziskan. Studien*, VII), 1917, 10.
- (18) V. The editions of E. d'Alençon, 1900 (p. 16); Minocchi, 1901; Quaracchi, 1929. It has been suggested that the authors were the Ministers General J. Parens, Crescenzo da Jessi, John of Parma or John Peckham. The editors of Quaracchi make no definite pronouncement. The *Chronicle of the 24 Generals* (*Anal. franc.* III, 283) ascribes the authorship to John of Parma. Personally I think Parenti's authorship is out of the question because of the date, and Jessi's owing to his general attitude.
- (19) The contemporary chronicler Burchard von Ursperg points this out as a result of his personal experience, having met a group of



converted Waldenses and the first companions of St. Francis when they were in Rome in 1210. (*V. Mon. Germ. hist. Script.* XXIII, 376; compare *Arch. franc. hist.* I, 73). These names of modern students should suffice: H. Grundmann; i.e. G. Schnürer, *Kirche und Kultur in MA II*; K. Müller, *Die Waldenser*; P. Mandonnet, *St. Dominique*, I and II.

- (20) V. A. Levasti, *Mistici del Duecento e del Trecento*, Milan 1935; A. Luchaire, *Innocent III*, Paris, 1905.
- (21) V. Grundmann. Although the Order of St. Dominic was founded at the same time as that of St. Francis, it does not concern us here, as it was not connected with the new ideal of poverty.
- (22) Included in the texts.
- (23) P. de Vineis, *Epistolarum libri 6*, I., ep. 37.
- (24) Mestica, 25.
- (25) This is chiefly due to the works of K. v. Hase, 1856; Henry Thode, 1885; and P. Sabatier, 1894.

#### GIOVANNI DI CEPRANO

- (1) Van Ortroj in *Anal. Boll.*, XIX, 1900; L. Lemmens in *Doc. ant. fr.*, II, 1901.
- (2) *V. Arch. franc. hist.*, XI, 56; *Anal. franc.*, III, 666.
- (3) MS. Vatican 7339 and Paris, Bibl. Nat. 12707. True, another phrase precedes *Quasi stella matutina*, but this is easy to explain. According to Wadding, *Annal* 1244 X, the author was writing at the orders of Pope Gregory IX, and as a true courtier he began his text with the same words with which the Pope had introduced his sermon at the Canonization of 1228. Later, in order to avert confusion, the similar phrase *praeifulgidus ut Lucifer* was employed first. Compare Lazzeti, *Leggenda* 141.
- (4) *Acta Sanctorum*, Oct., II, 723.
- (5) First used in the *Acta Sanctorum* by Suyskens, and published by the Bollandist van Ortroj, 1902 (*Miscell. franc.*, IX, 33).
- (6) V. Lazzari's argument in his edition of the *Legend of the Three Companions*, 1923, p. 124. Before I read them I had come to the identical conclusions, for the following reasons:
  - (a) the "Perugina" is an early text, and its author a citizen of Assisi, as only one of the latter would have been interested in the proper names of the citizens mentioned, which we find in none of the other legends.
  - (b) The prefatory remarks apply best to Brother Leo, where he introduces himself as the Saint's disciple and one of his first companions (despite van Ortroj).
  - (c) It is consistent with Brother Leo's authorship that the "Perugina" mentions the canonization, but not the building of the great basilica, which extravagance

had offended Brother Leo. (d) The realism of the description how St. Francis forces a friar to place the money on the asses' dung is characteristic for Brother Leo, just as it is characteristic for the courtly prelate Celano that this was the only scene he left out in his revised edition, especially as he was well aware that the collecting of money for the construction of the great basilica was no longer frowned on, and took place with the sanction of his master, Pope Gregory IX. (e) The introduction to the "Perugina" (Nos. 2 and 3) speaks for Brother Leo; it does not mention the Saint's parental home or his early youth at all and begins with the "first illumination" of the young merchant—but the author of the new edition felt impelled to relate at least some facts of St. Francis's early years. The last two chapters (17 and 18) of the traditional *Legend of the Three Companions* are not from the pen of Ceprano. I have placed the two preceding chapters (15 and 16) among the writings of Brother Leo in Part Three. These chapters betray some uncertainty as to chronology, and this is easy to understand in the case of Ceprano, who had no immediate access to the history of the Order. By leaving out these two chapters the story of the Saint's youth gains in coherence.

- (7) Text of the preface from the Vatican MS. 7339, and Paris, *Bibl. nat.*, 12707, reproduced in Minocchi, *Legenda trium sociorum*, Florence, 1900, 104, and Z. Lazzeri, *Leggenda dei tre compagni*, Florence, 1923, 140.
- (8) Her name was Pica (the title "Domina Pica" indicates noble birth), his father's name was Pietro di Bernardo(ne), i.e. Peter, son of Bernard. The former supposition that the family originated in Lucca has been dropped, and the supposedly French descent of the Saint's mother is doubtful. The name Pica can be found as a family name in some documents of Assisi (Fortini 42).
- (9) Francesco—literally "little Frenchman".
- (10) The narrator and those of other old legends are mistaken on this point. It is evident from the documents taken from the archives of Assisi, which Fortini published in the Jubilee Year, 1926, that the war between the civic republic of Assisi and feudal Perugia, the Ghibelline fief of the Popes, was waged with uninterrupted violence from 1202 to 1205. It continued until impoverishment and hunger brought not appeasement, but a dying down of the fighting, which continued to break out occasionally for a whole century. In 1322 Assisi was finally conquered by the Perugians. The real reason why St. Francis, who in his quality as son of a wealthy merchant was serving with his own mount under the blue and red banner of Assisi as a cavalryman, was allowed to return home in 1203 after a year's imprisonment was doubtless his severe illness. Thomas of Celano mentions it (*infirmirate attritus* i Cel. I, 2) without knowing

or mentioning its connection with the imprisonment in Perugia. It took about two years for Francis to recover his health sufficiently to set out on new adventures *cupidus gloriae*—thirsting for fame.

- (11) This was probably a certain Gentile da Fabriano (according to Fortini, 105) who had placed himself at the orders of the Papal general in Apulia, Walter of Brienne. It must have been prior to June 1205, as Walter of Brienne died at that time. Sons of wealthy merchants could become knights if they performed high feats of arms. The statutes of Assisi mention privileges received by men who had been knighted for their bravery (Fortini 106).
- (12) According to the second *Life* of Celano (2 Cel. I, 3) he also saw the bride "*sponsa pulcherrima*" in the splendid palace he was to receive. Although P. Schmidt questions this in his German edition of Celano (Basel, 1919) saying the bride is out of place in this context and has become introduced here by a transfer of the "mystical bride" (1 Cel. I, 3), we believe that Celano was well informed. In his worldly days Francis would have dreamt of a beautiful lady in the palace, because, apart from general considerations, the love of fair ladies was linked to great feats of arms in the ideals of chivalry. The same still held good in a much later age of chivalry, in the Spain of Loyola. The transformation of the palace into the ideal of a new spiritual edifice brought with it the analogous transformation of the fair lady into the mystic Lady Poverty.
- (13) Numerous noblemen of Assisi had been deprived of their properties as opponents of the democratic regime and partly as refugees and adherents of Perugia. If they did not, like St. Clare's kinsmen, make their peace with the consuls of their native city and receive their pardon, they had no alternative than to become *mundiales* (bondmen) of the Church. The Chapter of S. Ruffino received a number of bondmen in this manner (Fortini, 104).
- (14) Among the few statutes of the city of Assisi which were not destroyed by the Perugians in 1322, we find those for the use of the banquet-master of a *brigata*, i.e. a social club for good eating and drinking. The *podesta* of such a club carried a staff similar to that of the communal *podesta* as a badge of his dignity, and he decided how much the members had to pay for their meal (Fortini 115).
- (15) Thomas of Celano also mentions the delight young Francis took in singing (1 Cel. I, 1), and one is tempted to think that these *cantilenae* were improvised by the youth, in the manner of the contemporary troubadours, on the themes of warlike prowess and love. The mystic love-song which Wadding erroneously includes among the works of St. Francis (*Cantico secondo*, 154) is obviously a revised secular love-song which reminds one of Jacopone da Todi, unless

(like some authors) we ascribe it to Brother Pacifico, "who had been called the King of Verse in the world".

Lo mio sposo novello,	My new-found bridegroom
Quando l'anel mi mise	When he gave me the ring,
L'agnello amorosello	The little loving lamb,
Poi in prigion mi mise,	In prison has thrown me,
Ferito d'un coltello,	Wounded by a sharp knife,
Tutto 'l cor mi divise:	My heart he cut in twain.
In foco amor mi mise.	With love am I aflame.

- (16) Probably in summer or autumn, 1205.
- (17) The name of a brother Angelo is to be found in documents (Cristofani, *Storie*, I, 78).
- (18) This is followed by the description of the pilgrimage to Rome which must have taken place in autumn, 1205, or spring, 1206, which we include in Part II from the text of Thomas of Celano.
- (19) We must imagine the incidents described in this and the preceding chapter as having taken place in the year of the "conversion", 1206.
- (20) According to the anonymous author of Perugia (No. 7).
- (21) This incident is also to be found in the so-called *Legenda antiqua* (*Arch. franc. hist.*, XV, 295). In the *Speculum perfectionis* Brother Leo and his companions Ruffino and Angelo add this comment to the same story: "We knew that man and received this communication from him in person. Later he showed much kindness to Blessed Francis and to us, his companions."
- (22) Probably a messenger in his mother's confidence. The hollow in the wall of S. Damiano on the left of the entrance, which according to the legend was miraculously formed to offer a hiding-place to the Saint, has nothing to do with this episode, but was hollowed out later by order of St. Clare, who desired to have a life-size statue of the Saint placed there (*V. Wadding, Annal.* I, ad 1226, No. 42; Sabatier, *Coll. d'études*, II, p. cxvii).
- (23) According to Villari, in certain towns fathers had the legal right to imprison and also to fetter a spendthrift son, even when he had not been made a ward; they could even banish such a son from their native town (*V. Fortini*, 163).
- (24) Since 1018 the Bishop of Assisi possessed an Imperial privilege of jurisdiction over dependants of the Church, and Innocent III had enlarged the scope of this privilege by a brief in 1198 for Bishop Guido, according to which no secular court might judge a cleric or an inhabitant of houses or territories belonging to the Bishop without his consent (Fortini, 425, 432). By giving a sum of money to the priest, Francis had purchased his right as a *dimorante* and counted from then on as a tenant of the Bishop, under whose jurisdiction San Damiano stood at that time (Fortini, 163). Sabatier

is mistaken therefore when he believes that the attitude the Saint assumed proves that he was already a cleric at that time.

- (25) Trials were held on the open square in front of the Bishop's palace (Fortini, 446).
- (26) Since Roman days it had been possible to renounce one's family in legal form, which act included the renunciation of protection by arms and the right of inheritance. Obviously this legal separation was actuated by Francis's public declaration: "No longer father Pietro Bernardone." The date 16 April 1207 to be found in the *Perugia Legend* probably applies to his final renunciation of his father's protection and inheritance (V. Jørgensen, 200).
- (27) The name is mentioned in the *Perugia Legend* (No. 9).
- (28) Probably on 24 February 1209, at the gospel of the Mass of the Apostle, St. Matthew. In the meanwhile, after restoring San Damiano, he had likewise restored the churches of San Pietro and S. Maria di Portiuncula, the latter in the valley below Assisi (I Cel. I. 9).
- (29) Francis began to "preach"—that is, to speak to casually assembled groups in March 1209, not only in the open air, but likewise in the church of San Giorgio, and later, after his journey to Rome, 1210, also in the cathedral of San Ruffino. It is obvious that this was done with the consent of the Bishop, with whom he was on excellent terms. In the Middle Ages the churches were not exclusively reserved for divine service, but were used for different purposes, as negotiations, treaties, etc. Most of the treaties signed by citizens and nobles of Assisi at that time were made in the cathedral (Fortini, 177).
- (30) In the first place the "peace" of the Gospels was meant, but earthly peace must certainly have been a consummation devoutly to be wished for. In that year, 1209, peace negotiations were taking place. Perugia sent heralds to Assisi, offering "perpetual peace", but they were received in silence. The truce between the nobles and commoners of Assisi was primarily intended to strengthen their war-potential, so it is doubtful that this "pact", as has been assumed, was instigated by St. Francis and his companions (Fortini, 188, 446).
- (31) More of Brother Bernard in *Fioretti*, 2 (Part Five). "Brother" or "friar" was used for all members of the community in early times, no matter whether they were priests or laymen.
- (32) St. Francis, in his childlike understanding of divine providence, was following a very ancient usage in opening the Bible. This goes back to the pre-Christian *sortes*, a form of divination usual in ancient Rome, where Virgil or Homer played the rôle of the Bible or Missal in Christian times. Athanasius relates an example in his life of St. Anthony (*Vitae patrum*, I, 2). St. Augustine describes how he did this himself (*Conf.*, 8, 12).

- (33) Silvester joined the brotherhood in 1210, immediately after the return of the first twelve brothers from Rome, where they had received the approval of the Pope. Silvester was the first priest to join the community (*V. Bonaventure*, 3, 5; *Actus*, 38). Later on priests formed the majority. More on Silvester's life can be found in Bartolommeo da Pisa, *Conform.*, 1590, 61, and Wadding, *Annales*, 1209, 38 and 1212, 30.
- (34) Compare 1 Cel. II, 11, where St. Francis uses this parable in a more severe sense in an address to all the brethren.
- (35) This sentence, which can also be found in the *Perugia Legend* (17) and in the *Legend of St. Clare* (II, b. 1) proves that St. Francis and his companions knew nothing about the "Humiliati" of Milan and the "Catholic Poor" (converted Waldenses) in the South of France and Northern Italy, which two groups had been approved a few years earlier. These religious ideals were "in the air".
- (36) *V. Angelo Clareno*, *Archive* I, 564; P. Mandonnet, *Origines de l'Ordo de poenitentia*, 1898, 204; H. Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen*, 1935, 130.
- (37) 1 Cel. I, 12 describes a third journey with eight companions. Lemmens (*Doc. ant. Franc.*, I, 18) thinks the first journey (mentioned in chapter 9) should be eliminated. It is certain that if Brothers Bernard and Giles went to Spain on the third mission, this could not have taken place in 1209, when they all went to Rome.
- (38) The time summer or autumn, 1210, coincides with the calculations of Wadding, Sabatier, Civezza, Boehmer, Jørgensen, Fortini and Grundmann, though some authors assume the year 1209.
- (39) In the *Legend of Foligno*, published by Civezza, p. 78, and in the MS. at Hall in the Tyrol (*Anal. franc.*, III, 640), there follows this passage: "The names of the first twelve Brothers Minor, the founders of the Order . . . The first was Blessed Francis, the leader and founder of the community of the Brothers Minor and their first Superior. Two years after he had taken up his new way of life, he was followed by Brother Bernard of Quintavalle. The third was Brother Peter, the fourth Brother Giles, the fifth Brother Sabbatino, the sixth Brother Morico, the seventh Brother John da Capella, the eighth Brother Philip Longo, the first Visitor of the Poor Ladies, the ninth Brother John of S. Constantio, the tenth Brother Barbero, the eleventh Brother Bernard della Vite, the twelfth Brother Angelo of Tancredo."
- (40) Cardinal John Colonna had been a monk in the Benedictine Abbey, S. Paolo fuori le Mura. He pleaded the cause of St. Francis with great warmth, arguing that it was not licit to obstruct the imitation of Christ in evangelical poverty (*V. Bonaventure*, *Leg. Maior*, 3, 9). Pope Innocent III was sympathetic to the Franciscan ideals, although he would have wished them to be adapted to traditional monkish

rules (V. Angelo Clareno in Döllinger, *Sektengesch.*, II, 429). According to Clareno Cardinal Ugolino, St. Francis's later patron, was already on his side then.

- (41) *Gesch. d. wissenschaftlichen Studien*, 52; comp. Grundmann, 134.
- (42) This is the original draft of the First Rule. In the course of the following years until 1221 successive General Chapters added to it, but the final redaction of 1221 was still the First Rule (Wadding 49, Boehmer I, Rederstorff 33), not to be confused with the Second Rule, confirmed by a Bull of Pope Honorius III in 1223, which was newly drafted by the Saint by order of the Order and approved after the desired emendations had been made (H. Felder, 102).
- (43) The name of the abbot, Maccabeo, and those of his monks, are preserved on a document of 1212 (Fortini, 200). There were a number of Benedictine abbeys in the neighbourhood of Assisi, dating from the seventh century.
- (44) The Chapters were held twice a year since 1211 or 1212. Ten years later, when the constitution was secure, they were only held every three years. The "democratic" constitution of the friars with the parliament of the Order represented by the General Chapter was also taken over by the Dominicans.

### THOMAS OF CELANO

- (1) V. I Cel., preface and I, 20, further the *Chronicle of Jordan of Giano*, *Anal. franc.*, I comp., 8, 287.
- (2) As the modern editors of Celano (Quaracchi, 1926) remark.
- (3) The first part of Celano's new *Life* follows the *Legend of the Three Companions*.
- (4) V. Ed. Parma, 1857, 60.
- (5) The chapter-headings are by the editor and include several chapters of Celano's book.
- (6) Autumn, 1205, or spring, 1206, V. *Three Comp.*, chapter 3.
- (7) V. Thomas da Toscana in *Mon. Germ. script.*, 22, 492. His home was in a small village near Ascoli Piceno and he was the court poet of the Emperor Henry VI, whose entry into Naples after his coronation, 1191, he is said to have celebrated in verse. Frederic II crowned him as poet laureate on the Capitol.
- (8) V. Bonaventure, 4, 9.
- (9) St. Francis became very fond of Pacifico, whom he obviously wished to characterize by this name ("the peaceful one"). Thomas of Toscana also tells us that he gave him the affectionate nickname *pia madre*, sometimes reverently, sometimes teasingly. In 1217 St. Francis made him the leader of the first group of friars he sent to France (*Speculum*, 65), and in the last years of his life he would have

- liked to send him "into the world" to sing the Canticle of Brother Sun (*Speculum*, 100; Bartol. da Pisa, *Conform.*, 1590, 85a; Fort. Hueber, *Menologium*, 8 July, II, par. 2).
- (10) *Miramamolin* is Mohammed ben Nasser, *Emir el mumenin*, i.e. Head of the Faithful. He had been vanquished shortly before, 1212, in Spain and thrown back to Morocco.
- (11) He journeyed to Egypt, where the Christian army was beleaguering the Sultan before Damietta. After the fall of Damietta, the Saint continued towards Syria, but had to return home when he received the news of the disorders in the Order in Italy.
- (12) H. Boehmer, *Analekten*, 1930, 69, 71.
- (13) As the convent of the Poor Clares at San Severino was founded in 1223, as proved by a document of that year (*Misc. franc.* X, 1906, 17), the episode related here must have taken place during the last years of the Saint's life.
- (14) I could discover nothing about this Leonardo of Assisi, neither in Bonaventure nor Bartol. da Pisa.
- (15) Besides this example of the Saint's strict observance of poverty, Celano used a great part of the material given him by Brother Leo and his companions for his second *Life*.
- (16) V. E. d'Alençon, *Frère Jacqueline, l'ami de St. François*, Paris, 1899.
- (17) Wadding, 9; Boehmer, *Anal.*, 24; L. Oliger, *De origine regularum Ord. S. Clarae*, Quaracchi, 1912, 44.
- (18) Ed. by F. Pennacchi, Assisi, 1910. Compare the testimonies in the Cause, ed. Z. Lazzeri, *Arch. Franc. hist.*, V, XIII.
- (19) V. F. Casolini, *S. Chiara*, Milan, 1927, 130; L. Oliger, *De origine regularum Ord. S. Clarae*, Quaracchi, 1912.
- (20) V. Sabatier, *Le privilège de la pauvreté*, in *Revue d'hist. Franc.*, I, 1924, and *Miscell. franc.*, 25, 1: Grundmann, 148.

## THE WRITINGS OF BROTHER LEO AND HIS COMPANIONS

### INTRODUCTORY

#### *Bibliography*

- (1) *Spec. Sab.*—*Speculum Perfectionis*, ed. P. Sabatier, Paris, 1898.  
*Spec. Lemm.*—*Speculum Perfectionis*, ed. H. Lemmens, Quaracchi, 1901.  
 Delorme—*Legenda antiqua S. Francisci*, ed. F. M. Delorme, Quaracchi, 1922.  
 Civezza—*La Leggenda di S. Francesco, scritta de tre suoi compagni . . . nella vera sua integrità*, ed. M. da Civezza e T. Domenichelli, Rome, 1899.  
 Little—A. G. Little, *Description of a Fr. Ms: in Collection franc.* I, Aberdeen, 1914, and *Opuscles de crit. hist.*, XVIII Paris, 1914-18.



*Verba*—*Verba S. Francisci*, same edition, I, 100.

*Vita Aegidii* 37.

*Leg. vet.*—*Legenda vetus*, same edition, II, 91.

*Intentio*—*Intentio regulae*, ed. L. Lemmens in *Doc. ant. Franc.*, I, 83.

### Chronicles

Angelo Clareno, *Expositio regulae*, ed. L. Oliger, Quaracchi, 1912.

Angelo Clareno, *Historia septem trib.*, 1-2, Döllinger, *Beitr. zur Sektengesch.*, II, 1890. 3-7 F. Ehrle, *Archiv. f. Lit. u. Kirchengesch.*, II, 1886.

Ubertino da Casale, *Arbor vitae crucifixae*, Venice, 1485. Miscellaneous apologetic documents ed. F. Ehrle, *Arch.*, III, 1887.

- (2) The *Chronicle of the twenty-four Generals* (*Anal. franc.*, III, 65), and Bartolommeo da Pisa, *Conformitates*, 1590, 62a.
- (3) Published by F. Melchiorri, *Leggenda di S. Francesco*, Recanati, 1856. This edition escaped the notice of P. Sabatier. Since then the MS. has been newly described and edited by M. da Civezza and T. Domeniche (Rome, 1899).
- (4) Wadding, *Analecta*, 1260, No. 18.
- (5) Panfilo da Magliano, *Storia di S. Fr.*, I, 630, and Jörgensen, 81, support the former theory, F. Ehrle in *Arch.*, VI, 39, and L. Lemmens in *Doc. ant.*, II, 11, the latter.
- (6) Jörgensen, 82.
- (7) Ubertino da Casale, *Arbor*, fol. E, iii a.
- (8) It is characteristic for the temper that prevailed in the ranks of the Spirituals that Angelo Clareno introduces all the biographers in a manner befitting saints, but calls Bonaventure merely the Minister General (*Arch.*, II, 114).
- (9) Ubertino, *op. cit.*
- (10) V. Lemmens in *Documenta antiqua*, II, 10, Jörgensen, 81; Ehrle in *Arch.*, III, 554.
- (11) Thus called by Ubertino in *Arbor*, 222a, *Arch.*, III, 53, 75, 168.
- (12) Sigismund Brettler, in *Roma aeterna*, VI (1926), H. 9.
- (13) *Doc. ant. franc.*, II, 23.
- (14) *Doc. ant. franc.*, II, 13.
- (15) Lemmens saw this himself (*Doc. ant.*, II, 21) Delorme (in *Arch. Franc. hist.* XV, 332) says of certain passages of the *Speculum* group: "One cannot speak of a new version here," and this holds good for the others as well.
- (16) Minocchi, *Arch. storico Italiano*, XXIV, 40.

### THE WRITINGS (p. 72 ff.)

- (1) *Spec. Sab.*, 36; Delorme, 88; comp. variant in *Vita Aegidii*, No. 2, and *Anal. franc.*, III, 76. The chapter headings by the editor.

- (2) According to the *Legend of the Three Companions*, Giles did not join until the brethren had moved to Portiuncula, but the *Vita Aegidii* lays the scene in Rivotorto (v. *Acta Sanctorum*, Apr. III, 236; *Anal. franc.*, III, 74). Most probably (v. Sabatier, *Spec.* 263) the first friars moved from one of these places to the other, sometimes staying in the hut at Rivotorto to care for the lepers in the adjoining lazear-house, sometimes meditating in the mud hut which they had erected in the wood next to the chapel they had repaired at Portiuncula.
- (3) *Spec. Sab.*, 44; Delorme, 8; *Spec. Lemm.*, 12.
- (4) This had no connection with the political distinction between *minori* (commoners) and *maggiori* (noblemen), but was an expression of humility.
- (5) This is not a quotation from the First Rule, but a free rendering. One must not forget that the Rule underwent changes in the years between 1210 and 1221, and it is quite possible that Brother Leo remembered the original text.
- (6) Civezza, 21; *Spec. Sab.*, 97; 2 *Cel.*, II, 92.
- (7) *Spec. Sab.*, 42; 2 *Cel.*, II, 133.
- (8) *Spec. Sab.*, 27; *Leg. vet.*, 1; Delorme, 42; Civezza, 33; 2 *Cel.*, II, 15; Little, 160; partially in *Spec. Lemm.*, 24.
- (9) Civezza, 34; *Spec. Sab.*, 28; 2 *Cel.*, II, 133; Delorme, 45; *Leg. vet.*, 4; *Spec. Lemm.*, 26; Little, 161.
- (10) An old tradition has it that this was Brother Silvester, the priest who joined in 1210 (*Miscell. Franc.*, II, 30).
- (11) *Spec. Sab.*, 55; 2 *Cel.*, I, 12, 13; Delorme, 48; *Leg. vet.*, 7; *Spec. Lemm.* 27; Little, 140.
- (12) These fish, called "*Lasche*" in Italian, abound in the lake of Trasimeno and are looked upon as delicacies in Perugia (Penacchi, *Speculum*, 1925).
- (13) The church of Portiuncula was still mentioned in 1214 in a Bull of Pope Innocent IV as property of the Benedictines (Sabatier, *Spec.*, 209).
- (14) *Spec. Sab.*, 56; Delorme 53; *Spec. Lemm.*, 31a.
- (15) Civezza, 48; *Spec. Lemm.*, 31b; *Spec. Sab.*, 57; 2 *Cel.*, II, 143; Delorme, 54.
- (16) According to the chronicles, he died in 1220, five years after his entry. V. Sabatier, *Spec.*, 105; Bart. da Pisa, *Conform.*, 1590, 64c.; Wadding, *Anal.*, 1215., No. 5.
- (17) *Spec. Sab.*, 51; 2 *Cel.*, II, 115; Delorme, 34.
- (18) According to 2 *Cel.*, II, 115, this Brother was called Barbaro, and "*Insula Cipii*" probably does not refer to "Cyprus" but to a property of the "Scipi" or "Scipione" family near Assisi. Then the nobleman who joined the Order after this incident might be Brother Ruffino, St. Clare's cousin, who was a scion of that family.

- (19) *Spec. Sab.*, 54; 2 *Cel.*, II, 107; Delorme, 18.
- (20) *Spec. Sab.*, 86; 2 *Cel.*, II, 79; Delorme, 30.
- (21) Compare *First Rule*, 1221, chapter 12.
- (22) *Spec. Sab.*, 18; Civezza, 18; 2 *Cel.*, II, 44; Delorme, 43; *Leg. vet.*, 2; *Spec. Lemm.*, 25a.
- (23) Compare *First Rule*, 1221, chapter 8.
- (24) *Spec. Sab.*, 5; 2 *Cel.*, II, 26, 30, 32; Delorme, 22.
- (25) Civezza, 22; *Spec. Sab.*, 14; 2 *Cel.*, II, 34; Delorme, 23.
- (26) Compare *First Rule*, 1221, chapter 8.
- (27) Delorme, 108; *Spec. Lemm.*, 41; Little, 192; Civezza, 36; *Spec. Sab.*, 17; 2 *Cel.*, II, 51.
- (28) Civezza, 30; *Spec. Lemm.*, 42; *Spec. Sab.*, 37, 2 *Cel.*, II, 52; Delorme, 109; Little, 193.
- (29) Probably Rocca S. Angelo (Rocchicciola), north-east of Assisi, where one of the first huts of the Franciscans was built; or Brizzignano, an hour north of Assisi.
- (30) Civezza, 38; *Spec. Sab.*, 32; 2 *Cel.*, II, 56; Delorme, 28.
- (31) Civezza, 19; *Spec. Sab.*, 25; 2 *Cel.*, II, 46; Delorme, 95; Little, 147.
- (32) *Spec. Sab.*, 95; 2 *Cel.*, II, 88; Delorme, 115b; *Spec. Lemm.*, 22c, 23.
- (33) Civezza, 32; *Spec. Sab.*, 96; 2 *Cel.*, II, 91.
- (34) Civezza, 31; *Spec. Sab.*, 93; 2 *Cel.*, II, 90; Delorme, 31.
- (35) *Spec. Sab.*, 59, 60; 2 *Cel.*, II, 86; Delorme, 58; *Spec. Lemm.*, 33.
- (36) *Three Comp.*, 15; Civezza, 54.
- (37) Civezza, 50; *Spec. Sab.*, 43; 2 *Cel.*, II, 109; Delorme, 41.
- (38) It is probable that the Cardinal arranged the meeting between the two Saints, whose foundations had not yet been approved, with a definite purpose. St. Dominic's Order was approved a year later (1216) when he had based his Rule on that of St. Augustine, as the Council refused to consider new Rules. At the time he was still searching for a constitution, so it is quite feasible that his proposal to unite the two Orders is an historical fact.
- (39) Civezza, 51; *Spec. Sab.*, 23; 2 *Cel.*, II, 43; Delorme, 93; *Spec. Lemm.*, 2.
- (40) Civezza, 54, 56; *Spec. Sab.*, 21; 2 *Cel.*, II, 33; Delorme, 68.
- (41) This leads to the supposition that St. Francis, when he was in Rome in 1210, not only received the tonsure like his companions, which gave him the right to preach (*v. Arch.*, III, 570) but became a deacon. In 1 *Cel.*, I, 30, he is called "*Levita*".
- (42) Boehmer, *Analekten*, 66, 67.
- (43) *Three Comp.*, 15; Civezza, 55a.
- (44) By the "new way of life" one can only understand St. Francis's personal conversion, not the foundation of the Order, otherwise the eleven years do not tally.

- (45) *Spec. Sab.*, 65; 2 *Cel.*, II, 152; Delorme, 103; *Spec. Lemm.*, 36, 37; Little, 189.
- (46) Cardinal Ugolino was on his way to Northern Italy as Papal Legate. This is added in the Delorme MS. (p. 315). The meeting in Florence must have taken place soon after Whitsun, end of May 1217.
- (47) According to *Fioretti*, 13, Francis first went to Rome, where he was amply consoled for his disappointments by his mystical experiences at the tombs of the Apostles, and "thought no longer of the French journey". According to the *Chronicle of the Twenty-four Generals*, however, the pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles took place before the journey to France.
- (48) *Three Comp.*, 15; Civezza, 55b; 2 *Cel.*, I, 16.
- (49) The friars received their first Papal letter of recommendation, *Cum dilecti*, on 11 June, 1219.
- (50) This can hardly be called a prophecy, as it accords with the formalities of the "Curial" style, and the great position and influence of the Cardinal, who was the nephew of Pope Innocent III.
- (51) Fr. *Anecdotes historiques . . . d'Etienne de Bourbon*, publ. by G. Lecoq de la Marche, Paris, 1877, 215.
- (52) J. da Giano, *Chronica*, 11-13; *Anal. franc.*, I, 1885, 4.
- (53) *Spec. Sab.*, 78; 2 *Cel.*, I, 16.
- (54) J. da Giano, *Chronica*, 14.
- (55) Civezza, 57; *Spec. Sab.*, 6; 2 *Cel.*, II, 28.
- (56) Angelo Clareno, *Historia septem trib.*, ed. Döllinger, 445; comp. H. Felder, *Gesch. der wissenschaftl. Studien im Franziskanerorden* (1904), 125. The historical accuracy seems beyond a doubt.
- (57) *Spec. Sab.*, 3; 2 *Cel.*, II, 32; Delorme, 99; *Intentio*, 5, 6.
- (58) Civezza, 39; *Spec. Sab.*, 64; 2 *Cel.*, II, 106; Delorme, 104; *Spec. Lemm.*, 38; Little, 190.
- (59) Civezza, 59; *Spec. Sab.*, 39; 2 *Cel.*, II, 104; Delorme, 32.
- (60) Civezza, 67; *Spec. Sab.*, 46; 2 *Cel.*, II, 111; Delorme, 10; *Spec. Lemm.*, 14-16; Little, 158.
- (61) *Spec. Sab.*, 47; Civezza, 26.
- (62) *Spec. Sab.*, 48; Civezza, 27; 2 *Cel.*, II, 112.
- (63) *Spec. Sab.*, 58; Delorme, 57; *Spec. Lemm.*, 32; Little, 169.
- (64) Civezza, 53; *Spec. Sab.*, 7; 2 *Cel.*, II, 27.
- (65) *Spec. Sab.*, 11; Delorme, 101b; *Intentio*, 14, 16; Little, 185.
- (66) *The Testament* (Boehmer, *Annal.*, 26).
- (67) Civezza, 25; *Spec. Sab.*, 69; 2 *Cel.*, II, 147; Delorme, 39.
- (68) Compare H. Felder, *Gesch. d. wissenschaft. Studien*, 64.
- (69) *Spec. Sab.*, 72; *Intentio*, 7; 2 *Cel.*, II, 123; Delorme, 100a and b; Little, 150.
- (70) *Spec. Sab.*, 4; Delorme, 100c to e; Little, 151, 152; *Intentio*, 11; 2 *Cel.*, II, 147.

- (71) *V. First Rule*, chapter 2. The addition about the shoes is not found there, only in *Second Rule*, chapter 2.
- (72) Civezza, 24; *Spec. Sab.*, 75; 2 Cel., II, 120; Delorme, 40.
- (73) *Spec. Sab.*, 12; *Verba*, 1.
- (74) Civezza, 60; *Spec. Sab.*, 38; 2 Cel., II, 58; Delorme, 89.
- (75) *Spec. Sab.*, 35; Delorme, 87.
- (76) Civezza, 63; *Spec. Sab.*, 63; 2 Cel., II, 95; Delorme, 76.
- (77) *Spec. Sab.*, 61; Civezza, 61; Delorme, 74.
- (78) Delorme's text adds "*in confessione*", i.e. in the crypt of the cathedral.
- (79) According to Delorme, "scatter the ashes over his head".
- (80) Civezza brings the variant "chicken" instead of meat ("*carnes*"), which is in both *Spec. Sab.* and Delorme.
- (81) *Spec. Sab.*, 40; 2 Cel., II, 105; Delorme, 33.
- (82) *Spec. Sab.*, 13; Delorme, 15; *Verba*, 2.
- (83) *Spec. Sab.*, 20; 2 Cel., II, 31; Delorme, 67.
- (84) This same story is told by Celano, the episode being laid at Easter in Greccio. It is obvious that he was using the original of Brother Leo. It is possible that St. Francis, who liked such symbolical acts, acted the same scene twice, once at Christmas, once at Easter. Bonaventure takes the entire sting out of the story, narrating how St. Francis begged of his own brethren because it was too far to the village (see Part IV.)
- (85) Civezza, 68; *Spec. Sab.*, 62; 2 Cel., II, 93, 94; Delorme, 75.
- (86) Actually "during St. Martin's fast". During the Middle Ages the fast was kept from the octave of All Saints' till Christmas, as it is still to-day in the older monastic orders.
- (87) *Spec. Sab.*, 45; 2 Cel., II, 96, 103; Delorme, 9; *Spec. Lemm.*, 13; Bonav., 6, 3.
- (88) *Spec. Sab.* gives the place as Rieti, the text is "*Iteremnae*" which may be a distortion of "*in Teramne*" "*in Reate*".
- (89) *Spec. Sab.*, 68; Delorme, 17; *Verba*, 5.
- (90) This cannot have been the so-called "Chapter of the Mats" of 1221, as the Cardinal of Ostia did not attend that, but was represented by the Cardinal of Viterbo (J. de Giono, *Chron.*, 16). Either there is an error as regards the date, or all the Chapters were held under similar conditions. Most probably the Chapter in question was held at Whitsun, 1222, when the constitution of the new Rule was causing much excitement.
- (91) According to Angelo Clareno, whose source is Brother Leo, St. Francis did not even wish his brotherhood to be called an Order. Nor did he desire the titles *pater*, *magister*, lord, to be used among the brethren. . . . On the other hand he sometimes used the secular address "Sir" instead of "Brother" when he wished to honour someone. The first settlements were simply called *luogo* or *locus*

(place) and the hermitages used for retreats were known as *romitori*. "Monastery" or "convent" was eschewed as suggesting the fixed habitations of the old monastic orders. The later development of the little houses and huts of the early Franciscans into "convents" gave the name of "Conventuals" to the opponents of the strict observance of Franciscan poverty.

- (92) Text in *Mon. Germ. Scrip.*, 30, 580; H. Boehmer, 72; Sabatier, *Vie*, 274.
- (93) *Spec. Sab.*, 105; 2 *Cel.*, II, 6; Delorme, 70.
- (94) This episode reminds us of the perennial fighting between the Perugians and Assisians. The nobility of Assisi had gone over to the party of Perugia, where the government was still feudal, while Assisi was ruled since 1198 by consuls chosen from the common people. According to the prophecy of St. Francis, hostilities ceased in 1223 between Perugia and Assisi, after acts of violence on both sides. Pope Honorius III confirmed the peace-treaty with a Bull on 4 October.
- (95) *Spec. Sab.*, 1; Delorme, 16; *Intentio*, preface; *Verba*, 4.
- (96) St. Francis gave his manuscript to Brother Elias to read, and after a few days "the latter said he had lost it through carelessness" (Bonav., *Leg. Maior*, 4, 11). One cannot help thinking that he took good care to lose it.
- (97) While the Rule was still in the draft-stage. It is unusual to count *three* Rules—because the second never came to light. Doubtless it was almost identical with the third which St. Francis drafted immediately after the loss of the second. This had to be altered in several points, but Sabatier goes too far when he maintains that only the First Rule is that of St. Francis, the Second that of the Church. The discrepancies in the actual text are not so great. In any case Cardinal Ugolino was acting as a true friend of the Saint in attempting to bridge over the differences between his radical mysticism and the "commonsense" proposals of the majority in the Order (*v. M. Rederstorff*, preface to *Schriften d. hl. Franz v. Assisi*, 31; H. Felder, *Die Ideale des hl. Franz von Assisi*, 1923; S. Brettelle, *Aus dem Minoritenorden in Roma aeterna*, VI, 1926).
- (98) *Spec. Sab.*, 3b; *Intentio*, 6.
- (99) In the Rule of 1223, approved by Pope Honorius, this sentence was removed. This constituted a death-blow to the ideal of the strict observance of holy poverty and it nearly broke the Saint's heart. It is not the question here whether St. Francis understood the Gospel aright, as we have discussed in the Introduction. It detracts nothing from his religious heroism.
- (100) *Spec. Sab.*, 81; Delorme, 107; *Spec. Lemm.*, 40; Civezza, 58; 2 *Cel.*, II, 117.

- (101) Angelo Clareno, in *Hist. 7 trib.* ed. Döllinger, *Beitr. z. Sektengesch. d. Mittelalters*, 1890, II, 449. Brother Cesar, a trained theologian who helped St. Francis in setting down the Rule of 1221, in the same year was placed at the head of the province of the Order in Germany and returned in 1223 to Assisi to discuss different matters (J. da Giono, *Anal. franc.*, I, 5, 18, 32). After the Saint's death Brother Cesar had great difficulties with Brother Elias because of his devotion to the early ideals (*v. Lex. Theol. u. Kirch.*, II, 779).
- (102) Wadding, 22; H. Boehmer, 46.
- (103) *Legenda antiqua* in *Opuscles de crit. hist.* ed.; Sabatier, I, 1902, 94; Angelo Clareno in *Arch.*, III, 602.
- (104) Civezza, 52; *Spec. Sab.*, 67; 2 Cel., II, 84; Delorme, 112; *Spec. Lemm.*, 20.
- (105) Delorme, 115a; 2 Cel., II, 62; *Spec. Lemm.*, 22a; *Spec. Sab.*, 94.
- (106) *Spec. Sab.*, 330. Compare notes by E. d'Alençon in *Miscell. franc.*, IX (1902), 165.
- (107) *Spec. Sab.*, 29; 2 Cel., II, 53; Delorme, 25.
- (108) Civezza, 71; *Spec. Sab.*, 114; 2 Cel., II, 151.
- (109) *Spec. Sab.*, 99; 2 Cel., II, 81; Delorme, 56, 113; *Spec. Lemm.*, 21a; Little, 159, 168.
- (110) Compare for the first period of this temptation our texts, Nos. 49, 65, and for the second period on Mount Alverna, *Fioretti*, No. 56.
- (111) Delorme, 78; *Spec. Sab.*, 100; 2 Cel., II, 161.
- (112) This dating is not quite exact, it should be "a year and a half before his death", namely in summer 1225. St. Francis left Mount Alverna on 30 September, 1224, and rode slowly on his donkey towards Assisi, stopping some time on the way at Borgo S. Sepolcro and Città di Castello. Then he immediately started on a new journey, preaching in towns and villages and tending the lepers, until he was so exhausted that Brother Elias told him he would not live much longer (1 Cel., II, 4, 8).
- (113) *Spec. Sab.*, 91; Delorme, 72, 77.
- (114) Delorme, 81; *Spec. Sab.*, 115a.
- (115) Delorme, 82; *Spec. Sab.*, 89.
- (116) Civezza, 74; *Spec. Sab.*, 110; 2 Cel., II, 15; Delorme, 61.
- (117) *Spec. Sab.*, 115; Delorme, 83, 84; 2 Cel., II, 125.
- (118) *Spec. Sab.*, 116; Delorme, 84a.
- (119) *Spec. Sab.*, 33; 2 Cel., II, 59; Delorme, 85.
- (120) Civezza, 75; *Spec. Sab.*, 53; 2 Cel., II, 69; Delorme, 29.
- (121) *Spec. Sab.*, 10; Delorme, 51; *Spec. Lemm.*, 30a; Little, 166.
- (122) *Spec. Sab.*, 50; Delorme, 19; *Spec. Lemm.*, 44.
- (123) *Spec. Sab.*, 87; Delorme, 52; *Spec. Lemm.*, 30b.

- (124) This is not his last great testament, which he probably dictated a little later, on his return to Assisi and of which a part is included here.
- (125) Civezza, 40; *Spec. Sab.*, 74; 2 Cel., II, 118; Delorme, 3.
- (126) Civezza, 37; *Spec. Sab.*, 30; 2 Cel., II, 54; Delorme, 26.
- (127) *Spec. Sab.*, 31; 2 Cel., II, 55; Delorme, 27.
- (128) *Spec. Sab.*, 2; Delorme, 98a and c; *Intentio*, I, 4.
- (129) *Spec. Sab.*, 41; 2 Cel., II, 141; Delorme, 36.
- (130) *Spec. Sab.*, 71; Delorme, 101a; *Intentio*, 95; Little, 184.
- (131) *Spec. Sab.*, 109; Delorme, 4; *Spec. Lemm.*, 8; Little, 153.
- (132) *Spec. Sab.*, 111; Delorme, 64.
- (133) *Spec. Sab.*, 101; Delorme, 79.
- (134) Bishop Guido of Assisi was known for his fighting spirit when his property was menaced. In 1198 he had caused Pope Innocent to confirm his title to church-property; ten years later the men of the prior of S. Apollinare d'Assisi attacked him on the road; in 1217 to 1218 he had a lawsuit against the canons of S. Ruffino, which was settled owing to the intervention of Cardinal Ugolino, probably through the offices of St. Francis, who first brought the Cardinal to Assisi.
- (135) *Spec. Sab.*, 119; Delorme, 78b.
- (136) *Spec. Sab.*, 118; 2 Cel., II, 124; Delorme, 84c.
- (137) *Spec. Sab.*, 121; Delorme, 96; *Spec. Lemm.*, 4; Little, 148.
- (138) Delorme, 80; *Spec. Sab.*, 90.
- (139) *Spec. Sab.*, 122; 2 Cel., II, 163; Delorme, 97; *Spec. Lemm.*, 5; Little, 149.
- (140) *Spec. Sab.*, 124a; Delorme, 5; *Spec. Lemm.*, 9.
- (141) *Spec. Sab.*, 80; 2 Cel., II, 139; Delorme, 35.
- (142) *Spec. Sab.*, 88; 2 Cel., II, 163; Delorme, 21; *Spec. Lemm.*, 34; Little, 186.
- (143) L. Wadding, 9; H. Boehmer, 24.
- (144) Civezza, 78; *Spec. Sab.*, 112; *Actus Sab.*, 18; *Cel. Mirac.*, 37, 38; Delorme, 7; *Spec. Lemm.*, 11; Little, 157.
- (145) According to *Fioretti*, LVIII, the text of the letter was as follows: "To the noble Lady Jacoma, the handmaiden of God, Brother Francis, Christ's poor Little Man, sends greetings in the communion of the Holy Spirit in our Lord Jesus Christ. Know, dear friend, that Christ the Blessed One in His great mercy has shown me the end of my life, which will be soon. If therefore you would find me still alive, set out as soon as you receive this letter and come to St. Mary of the Angels, for if you have not yet arrived by that day you will no longer find me among the living. Take with you a shirt of hair-cloth to serve me as a shroud, and the wax needed for the burial. I also beg you to bring me some of the food you used to prepare for me when I was ill in Rome."



- (146) *Spec. Sab.*, 107; Delorme, 11; *Spec. Lemm.*, 17.
- (147) This report on the dying Saint's blessing of Brother Bernard is also to be found in the *Perugia Legend*, in the MS. of Bartolommeo da Pisa and Wadding, *Annales*, but is diametrically opposed to the statement of Celano (1 Cel., II, 7), where he says that the Vicar General, Brother Elias, received the blessing. In view of the party feud reigning in the Order at the time, it is impossible to discover the actual truth of the matter. It is strange that Celano should not have rectified his statement in his second *Life*, when the tendencies had changed. It is natural that the authors of the *Fioretti* would not admit Brother Elias as the recipient of the blessing, but this does not clarify the matter.
- (148) *Spec. Sab.*, 123; Delorme, 6; *Spec. Lemm.*, 10; Little, 156.
- (149) *Spec. Sab.*, 108; Delorme, 12; *Spec. Lemm.*, 18.
- (150) Evidently the letter of which a fragment has been preserved and which we include here as No. 105.
- (151) *Spec. Sab.*, 113; Delorme, 13; *Spec. Lemm.*, 19.
- (152) *Spec. Sab.*, 124b.
- (153) The original contains the mistaken statement, "in the fortieth year of his life".

## BONAVENTURE

- (1) "*Nudus nudum sequi Christum*" is a characteristic phrase often found in early Franciscan literature (ep. 125—Migne Lat., 22, 1085).
- (2) Compare S. Brettle, F. Ehrle, W. Goetz, H. Felder.
- (3) K. Müller, *Die Anfänge des Minoritenordens*, 1885, 109.
- (4) *V. Sacrum commercium b. Francisci cum Domina paupertate* ed. E. d'Alençon, 1900, 21.
- (5) Denifle, I, 1890.
- (6) *V. Expos. reg.*, 2 and 9; *Opera*, Quaracchi, VIII, 391.
- (7) *V.* his "Letter to a Master". op. cit., 331.
- (8) *Archive*, II, 277.
- (9) *Archive* II, 266.
- (10) If the reader find a considerable amount of new material here, this is due to my arrangement of the texts, as I have shortened the former legends by those passages included in the later ones.
- (11) According to the editor of *Anal. franc.*, II, p. xxii.
- (12) *V. Anal. Boll.*, XIX, 133.
- (13) According to Lemmens, the first *Speculum* (the papers of Brother Leo and the companions) may have been collated at that time (*Doc. ant.*, II, 1901, 21).
- (14) The prerogative of preaching belongs legally to the Bishop, and in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries he instituted the preachers in the parishes, theoretically at least, though not in practice. Most of

the Bishops preached only occasionally, and the parish-priest did the same. There was little response to Pope Innocent III's warnings to oppose the new heretical movements, and it was not until St. Francis and St. Dominic began their apostolic missions that this state of affairs was remedied (Lecoy de la Marche, *La chaire française au moyen-âge*, 1886; P. Mandonnet, *St. Dominique*, II, 1).

- (15) If one compares this episode with its source (2 Cel., II, 31, and *Spec. Sab.*, 20.—No. 58 in our Part III) one cannot help admiring the art with which Bonaventure adapted its original intransigence to the spirit of the times.

### FIORETTI

- (1) V. Ehrle in *Archive*, II, 321; III, 616, IV, 43. The Spirituals should not be confused with the *fraticelli* who rebelled and formed several sects, while the Spirituals finally produced the followers of the strict observance, among whom Bernardino of Siena and Bertold of Regensburg stand out as closely approaching the original ideals.
- (2) V. His letter to Conrad of Offida, published by J. Jeiler in *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 3, 652; L. Oliger in *Arch. franc. hist.* II, (1918) 366.
- (3) V. Angelo Clareno, *Hist. 7 trib.* 2; Döllinger, op. cit., II, 464.
- (4) V. Grundmann, *Studien über J. v. Fiore*, 1927, and *Hist. Jahrbuch*, 49, 33. J. Ch. Huck, *J. v. F.*, 1938.
- (5) V. Bart. of Pisa, *Liber Conform.*, Bologna, 1590.
- (6) V. Brettell in *Roma aeterna*, VI, 1926; Ehrle *Arch.*, I-III.
- (7) References follow.
- (8) V. P. Doncoeur and Faloci-Pulignani, A. Levasti, Batelli.
- (9) A. F. Azanam, *Les poètes franc.*, Schlüter-Storck, Brugnoli, Levasti.
- (10) *Actus*, chapter 69; *Floretum*, 45.
- (11) Wadding and Suyskens call him Hugolinus de Monte maiori (—Monte Giorgio—Monte S. Maria). According to Luigi di Fabriano, the family of Brunforte, called also Bonconte, hailed from Sarnano Monte Giorgio.
- (12) The nucleus of this story is to be found in *The Leg. of the Three Comp.*, chapter 8. Compare the Life of Br. Bernard in *Anal. franc.*, III, 35, and B. da Pisa, *Conform.*, 1590, 60.
- (13) At the church of San Niccolò next to the Palazzo Vescovile on the market-place.
- (14) In 1211, soon after the first companions' journey to Rome (Wadding).
- (15) Niccolò de Pepoli (Wadding, *Annal.*, 1220, No. 9).
- (16) This was in 1213, and in 1220 he himself joined the brotherhood.
- (17) Compare the relation of the *Speculum*, Part III, No. 107.
- (18) It is very characteristic of the spirit of the *Fioretti* that not a word is said of the persecutions which overshadowed the last years of

Brother Bernard and the first companions. Compare *Admonitiones*, 5, 3 (Boehmer, *Anal.*, 29; Wadding, *Opera*, 27).

- (19) There still stands a Franciscan convent, with frescoes by Benozzo di Lese, on the Isola Maggiore in the middle of the green orchards.
- (20) Brother Masseo was one of the first to join him after the pilgrimage to Rome of 1210. A life-story of him is to be found in *Anal. franc.*, III, 115; B. da Pisa, *Conform.*, 1590, 62d.
- (21) There is no need to doubt the historical accuracy of this narration because of the enclosure, which was also infringed by the visit of Lady Jacoma at the Saint's deathbed. The "Second Order" had not been founded with a view to its becoming enclosed, and this was not altered by the Rule of Ugolino in 1218; it was not till Innocent IV reformed the Order in 1247 and 1253 that the Order became strictly enclosed, and half a century later, under Bonifacius VIII, enclosure became a condition for contemplative orders (V. Oliger, Casolini, *op. cit.*; also Lempp, *Die Anfänge des Clarissenordens*, Beaufreton, *Ste. Claire d'Assisi*).
- (22) Bonaventure also relates how St. Francis meditated on the two main ideas of his foundation—missionary activities and contemplation—probably to prepare himself for the talks at the Lateran Council in Rome, 1215, and how he sought the council of St. Clare and his priestly companion Silvester.
- (23) This can only have happened at Whitsun, 1219, which is the only date when both St. Francis and St. Dominic can have been in Assisi.
- (24) San Fabiano, known to-day as Madonna del Bosco. It lies surrounded by a wood of oaks and chestnuts.
- (25) This was Melek el Khamil, Sultan of Egypt, who was being beleaguered by the Christian army in Damietta (1 Cel., I, 20, Jacques de Vitry).
- (26) I have been unable to discover whether the end of this story is fact or legend. A whole chapter of the *First Rule* deals with the mission to the Saracens. It is beyond doubt that all the Saint's attempts at converting them during his lifetime failed, for, despite their heroic enthusiasm, they were insufficiently prepared (Felder, *op. cit.*, 65).
- (27) *First Rule*, chapter 9; 1 Cel., I, 15; *Testament*, 1; *Spec. Sab.*, 44, 58.
- (28) Compare Part III, No. 62.
- (29) This story is reliable on all points. Brother Riccieri's close friendship with the Saint emerges from *Spec. Sab.*, 2 (Part III, No. 90), his family history and sensitive nature from 1 Cel., I, 18, which also mentions his "temptation".
- (30) Both the manner of the telling and certain characteristic passages (how Brother Leo *strictissime cogitans*—in other words, keeping a straight face, not without difficulty) point to Brother Leo himself as the source of this story. Brother Ruffino, as already mentioned, was St. Clare's cousin and helped her in her "flight". He was one

of St. Francis's favourite companions and in 1246 helped Brothers Leo and Angelo with the collection of reminiscences then used by Celano and in the *Speculum*.

- (31) Obviously about the institution of the Rule for the Poor Clares, in which Pope Gregory IX, the former Cardinal Ugolino, had not only to contend with St. Clare but with the absent St. Francis about such questions as the strict observance of poverty and the question of enclosure (*V. Acta Sanctorum*, II, 762).
- (32) This is one of the passages which make it quite clear that the Poor Ladies performed works of mercy impossible to combine with strict enclosure.
- (33) The Latin version has it that King Louis had decided to go on a crusade to the holy places, which was to last seven years. It actually began 1248 and ended 1254.
- (34) This is quite possible, seeing that King Louis had a great affection for the mendicant Orders and is always spoken of with veneration in Franciscan chronicles. I have however failed to find a confirmation in Joinville's *Life of King Louis* or other sources. The Vatican MS. 4354 also contains the story of the mystic meeting, but not in the actual *Life of Brother Giles*, only in a chapter added later at an uncertain date (*V. Lemmens, Doc. ant. fr.*, I, 51).
- (35) St. Anthony of Padua was a Portuguese nobleman by birth, left the Augustinian Order in 1220 to join the brotherhood of St. Francis, and was entrusted in 1223 with the instruction of the Brothers Minor at their House of Studies in Bologna. St. Francis wrote to him: "I approve of your giving lectures on holy theology, but I entreat you earnestly not to let the spirit of holy prayer suffer by it, either in yourself or in others" (Wadding, 8; Boehmer, 48). After a time St. Anthony exchanged the chair for the life of a wandering preacher, and in the South of France and Italy his eloquence converted many Albigenses and Waldenses.
- (36) This is an allegory on the conversion of the heretics at Rimini. The naïveté of this legend is not quite genuine, and the miracle has as little claim to historical accuracy as the other miracles of the legends of St. Anthony. It is obviously inspired by St. Francis's sermon to the birds (*V. L. de Kerval* [1906], the editor [1927], H. Felder [1933]).
- (37) According to Wadding's *Annales* for 1210 Brother Simon joined that year. *Anal. Franc.*, III, 169 relates his life-story, further texts on him in B. of Bassa, Angelo Clareno, and Bart. of Pisa. This chapter is not to be found in the Latin *Actus*, only in the Italian *Fioretti*.
- (38) With the exception of chapters 45, 46, 47, 48, which go back to the middle of the thirteenth century, under the Ministers General Crescentio, John of Parma and Bonaventure.

(39) *Floretum*, XII.

(40) The historical background of this legend is as follows: John of Parma had to resign as Minister General in 1275. He wished to reform the Order in accordance with the ideals of the Founder's Testament. Bonaventure, his successor, condemned him to life-long imprisonment, but had to release him at the intervention of Cardinal Ottoboni, later Pope Hadrian V (*Archive*, II, 285; Angelo Clareno; Bernard of Bassa). Even the latter, who was Bonaventure's secretary, refers to him as "eminent for his science and devotion, a great lover of poverty and humility". The Church beatified him in 1777 (*Archive*, I, 517). According to the *Chronicle of the Twenty-four Generals* he was the author of *The Mystic Nuptials of the Lady Poverty*. This shows that there were grave reasons for the attitude expressed in this legend, but it is unjust to St. Bonaventure, the purity of whose intentions is beyond doubt. Here the Little Flowers are poisoned.

(41) *Floretum*, 194.

(42) He lived about the middle of the thirteenth century, under the Minister General Crescentius (Angelo Clareno, *Arch.*, III, 121, 261, 279).

(43) Not to be confounded with the elder Masseo de Marignano, the companion of St. Francis.

(44) Brother Bentivoglio was also venerated after his death by the people and beatified by the Church.

(45) This is not found in the original collection of the *Actus*, and appears for the first time in Latin in the *Chronicle of the Twenty-four Generals*.

(46) This is Penna near Macerata, not to be confused with Penna in the Abruzzi.

(47) This Brother Matthew is often mentioned in the *Story of the Seven Tribulations*, finally as Minister of the March at the time of Bonaventure.

(48) John of Alverna was born 1259 in Fermo, joined the Augustinians as a boy and entered the Franciscan brotherhood in 1271. He preached in Florence and in Tuscany, was a friend of Jacopone da Todi, and died in 1332. His cult as "Blessed" was approved in 1880. He wrote a mystical treatise entitled *The Steps of the Soul*.

(51) The Emperor Henry VII and many high prelates often came to Brother John's cell to be edified by his conversation (Oligeri).

(52) *Actus*, 9; *Floretum*, p. 239.

(53) These are: Brother Leo's note on the paper inscribed with his blessing by St. Francis, 1224, bearing witness of the stigmata. Brother Elias's letter to Gregory of Naples, 1226, also confirming the stigmata (Boehmer, *Anal.*, 61; 1 Cel., II, 3 [stigmata]; 2 Cel., II, 17 [water from the rock]; 2 Cel., II, 98-100 [St. Francis tries

to hide the stigmata]; 2 Cel., II, 127 [falcon]; *Speculum*, 99 [stigmata]; Bonaventure, *Legenda maior*, 13, 3 [stigmata]); and the official report written by Brother Philip of Toscana in 1283, *Instrumentum de stigmatibus* (*Anal. franc.*, III, 374, 641).

- (54) According to Sbaralea (*Bullarium franc.*, IV, 156), Mount Alverna was given to St. Francis on 8 May 1213. His retreat on the mountain did not take place till 1224.
- (55) This chapter does not figure in the original collection of the *Fioretti*. Amoni first published it in Rome in 1889, from a text by Brother Masseo, not mentioning the source.

## LAUDE

- (1) Lauda, plur. laude, or laude, plur. laudi, both derived from "laus, laudes" are songs or poems of praise.
- (2) V. Part III, No. 105.
- (3) Boehmer, *Anal.*, 57.
- (4) *Spec. Sab.*, 120.
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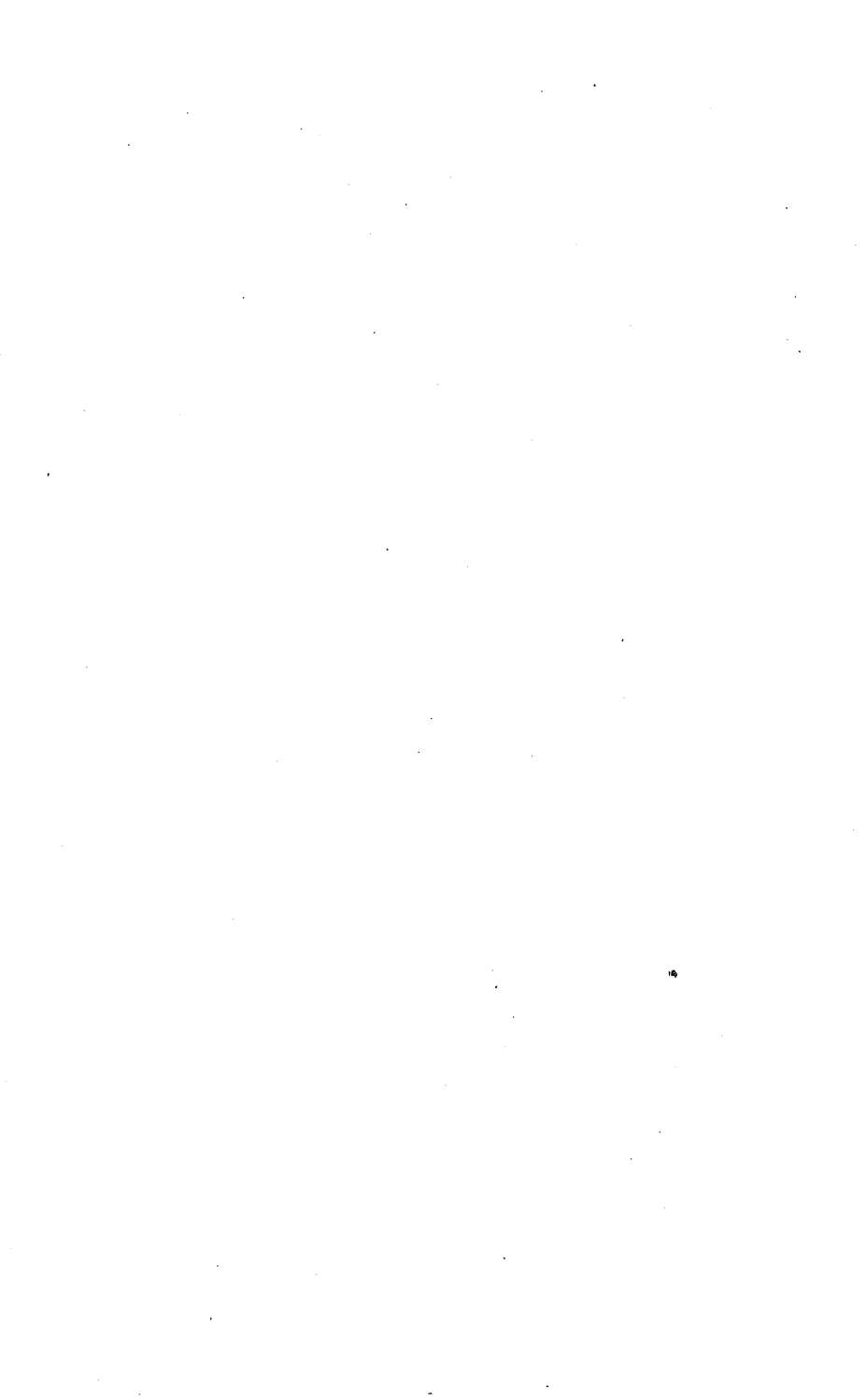
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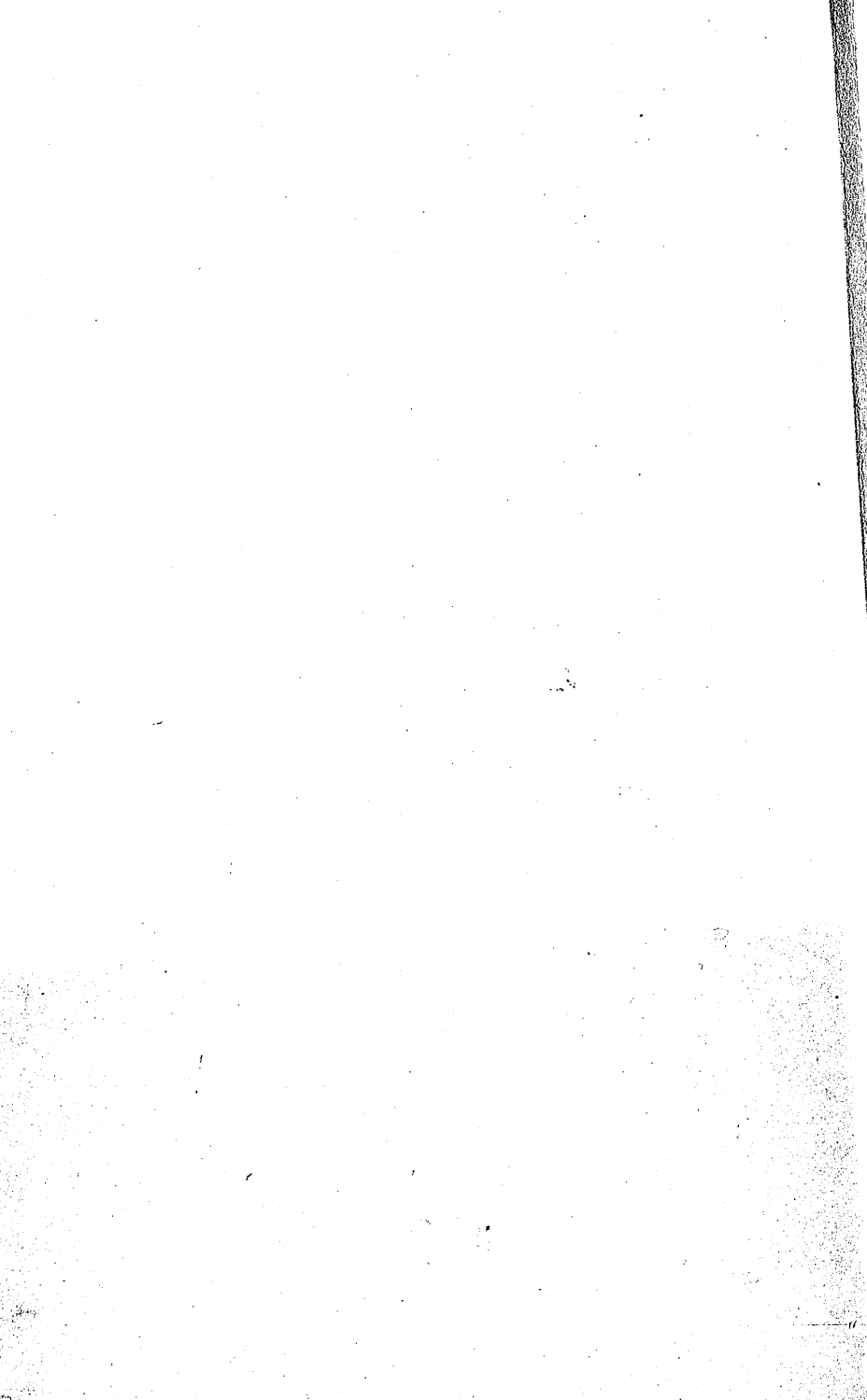
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